

One More Time Optimus Prime!

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One More Time Optimus Prime!

by [prisonmechanic](#)

Summary

Primus is fed up with the divide of it's people. With religion being essentially removed from Autobot and Decepticon tradition alike, Primus takes a more... roundabout way of fixing the issue; Namely throwing a Prime into a time loop until someone figures the whole mess out.

But Megatron's being difficult and Ratchet can't help but notice the change in his commanding officer. Oh and Sentinel isn't going to be any help.

Notes

Quick disclaimer, I do not own any of the characters used, as they belong to Hasbro.

It's my first time writing for this fandom so whoo!

I apologize for any mistakes. So enjoy anyways!

There will be more to this eventually when collage gives me breaks to write.

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Prologue - Let's Do The Time Warp Again!

Optimus prime had gone to berth with the figurative imprint of the Magnus hammer in his hand. The Deceptions defeated on earth had been safely tucked away in Trypticon prison and his team had all been safely returned to Cybertron, with the regrettable exception of Prowl. A drink to the fallen soldier had been raised on the transport back to Cybertron, and a memorial held soon. But with all that had happened recently, the team had earned at least one defrag cycle in peace. Optimus' processor was quiet that night. The warm darkness enveloped him, making for a quiet, peaceful defrag cycle. And suddenly he was stumbling out of a stasis pod on Omega Supreme.

Optimus prime referred to this as the first loop.

By the third loop Optimus was keeping a detailed daily log including daily events and weather patterns. Logging deception movements outside of his official reports was technically illegal, and if found could label him a traitor but he did so anyway, at this point he was unsure the arrest would stick. He had found items stored in his subspace could be transferred over loops, allowing him to keep data pads of information on him through a reset.

Fourth loop- the night cycle following the all-sparks fracture.

"We've been at this all night bots bot!" Bumblebee's voice came shrill over the cons, bringing Optimus out of his route planning.

"Bumblebee have you received the shard piece?" Was his only response. It was late he had to admit. But if retrieving them meant preventing future issues with the Decepticons, Optimus didn't mind pushing his team. Also finding them in advance could prevent prowls-

"Yeah yeah Bulk and I got it. Can we come back now? The sun's about to come up and we both REALLY need a defrag cycle." Bee's voice did sound tired and somewhat strained.

"Alright you two, head back to base, the next one is going to take all of us to grab. Prowl, Sari, what's your status on the fragment in your sector?" Was that strain he heard in his own voice?

"You're having us look through GARBAGE Optimus, how do you think it's going?" Okay. Note to self, Sari got significantly grumpy after a certain time.

Optimus sighed to himself before responding, "Trust me that fragment in particular will save us ALL a large helm ache."

"That's it." Ratchet's voice sounded from behind him, "I'm calling an end to this as this team's physician."

Optimus unconsciously rubbed his comm array before turning to Ratchet behind him. The medic was stood firmly, visibly annoyed. The darkness of the base lent him a further look of age, most

likely aided by lack of defrag. When Optimus failed to offer a response, the medic continued.

"We've all had a frag of a day with Megatron beating us all to slag and now this? You're going to drive me to a spark attack and everyone else to exhaustion! Call them all back, and we're all calling it a night. All of us."

"No."

"What do you mean no?! Optimus what has gotten into you?" Ratchet, though voice edged with concern still took an aggressive tone.

Another sigh escaped Optimus' vocalizer, "things are more complicated than they seem Ratchet, and there are lives at stake-

"Well news for you kid, we ain't elite guards mech," Ratchet made a show of placing his fingers to his comm array before speaking, "everyone return to base. I'm calling this one for the night."

Loop 4. Autobot victory. Not all fragments uncovered. 1 casualty.

Loop 5- arrival of the elite guard upon earth.

Optimus stood still, silent as Ultra Magnus' team exited their craft. Jazz's dialogue matched past logs as did Sentinel's taunts.

Silence was ideal, even as Bulkhead moved to attack, all Optimus did was prevent him from causing damage. And as Ultra Magnus and Sentinel rolled out to investigate, Optimus hung back a moment in the bay.

Jazz shot him a questioning look as Optimus took out a data pad from his subspace and offered it to the white mech in front of him.

Jazz shot him a concerned look in return.

"I regret having to put you in this situation but I need you to do something very important to me. This data pad contains a few sets of coordinates along with several detailed reports."

Jazz slowly took the pad in response and looked it over.

"You'll find the Decepticon base at the coordinates along with the allspark fragments I know of. Couple that with some interesting information about the space bridges along the outer reaches and Longarm Prime and I'm sure you'll be off this planet quite quickly."

Jazz quickly skimmed the contents before returning his gaze to Optimus, "Why not hands this to Ultra Magnus? I ain't really in the position to-"

Optimus raised his hand, "They won't believe us about Decepticons on earth; do you think they'll believe us about any of that? All I'm asking is that you look into those coordinates."

And with that Optimus followed his commander.

Jazz stood somewhat confused and simply shrugged at Ratchet as he entered the bay with a

determined look on his face.

Loop 5. Autobot victory. All fragments uncovered. No casualties.

Note; Refer to this method as the 'Jazz Shortcut', as it significantly reduced time of loop.

Loop 6- Halloween night

Optimus had to admit even though this was the sixth time loop he had gone through he still hadn't found the best way to deal with Elita- Blackaracnia yet. And with the crushing realization saving Prowl from the Well wasn't the solution to his time loop issues; Optimus was convinced to look elsewhere for a solution.

And thus, Blackaracnia. A ghost from the past recently ignored or abandoned or perhaps simply avoided was the next target of his attention.

Sari and bumblebee were placated with video games and candy and we're on strict house arrest along with the rest of the team. Ratchet had protested profusely but Optimus had made it clear no one was to leave the base.

"Being out in the open all in your lonesome, not wise for an Autobot."

And suddenly he was face down on the concrete, pain searing through the back of his helm. Pushing up only earned him a kick to his spinal strut, forcing him back down.

"Where is the key Optimus. Don't try my patience, I've got no patience for you." The voice was just as spiteful as he remembered.

"Elita- um Blackaracnia...."

There was a harsh growl behind him, "I'm glad to see you recognize an old friend."

"Let me up and I'll talk. Blackaracnia, there are things we should talk about."

He was let up slowly, and thought as he rose he saw a pair of blue optic from behind a building, but they were gone in a flash.

She was right in the end. The Autobot science division was not forgiving to the technorganic. Optimus regretted the entire idea, marking the logs he kept of that loop as 'sensitive material'.

Loop 6. Autobot victory. All fragments recovered. One casualty. DO NOT ATTEMPT AGAIN.

Loop 7- arriving at Cybertron

Optimus supposed he identified with Starscream the most, though through his own mistakes

Optimus found himself relating to the cast out Decepticon. Not being able to achieve what one wanted due to the chain of command... Optimus could relate to that. He knew spending time with the seeker was risky, but he liked to see the best in the treacherous mech, and Starscream seemed to be quite docile without the constant dying.

Given he was the only Decepticon to actually speak to Optimus other than orders.

The idea to change factions had come from Elita-One. Being a Decepticon would make reconciliation much easier, and allowed to try another... If not more dangerous route to changing the time loop. A Decepticon victory may not be favourable, but he had a contingency plan.

He left his team hidden on earth, all-spark intact and safely tucked away. If he couldn't keep the Autobots free through his influence in command, he would simply have to get as many as he could back to earth to regroup, and without Blurr to pick out Shockwave (Optimus had him sent back to Cybertron early this time around), the original Decepticon plan had been easier to execute, pair that with Sentinel refusing to acknowledge the Decepticon presence on earth and things had gone quite well.

Detroit had been lost. But he had warned the police in advance, no lives were lost that he knew of.

Their approach on Cybertron was rapid as battleship after battleship entered Cybertron's orbit.

"Optimus, head to observation deck, Megatron wants to see you" Starscream motioned behind him towards the exit of the command deck, a smug look on his face. Starscream smug was a bad sign. But an order was an order, especially to the bottom of the food chain. Optimus made his way up immediately, only slowing to nod to Blackarachnia as he passed.

When he made his way into the observation deck, Megatron was alone. Cybertron looked stunning, it's light cast a silhouette over the warlord. The blue light cast a cool look over the deck, though Optimus knew better than to take the beauty as a sign to relax.

"My lord," he said, bowing as he entered, "I have come at your request."

"We have much to discuss Prime."

Optimus mentally winced at the name, but knew better than to correct the warlord. He walked up and stopped to his left, slightly behind Megatron.

"I find it odd. Or perhaps you were just more stupid than I thought."

"What do you mean my Lord?" Submission and respect oozed from his voice, it was the only way he knew of to avoid the brunt of whatever wrath was coming his way but it was never a guarantee.

"I had taken you on under Blackarachnia's recommendation, and you had proved most useful when dealing with the Autobot menace. "

Megatron's leftward turn was the only warning Optimus had before there was a sword plunged through his spark chamber. The pain was hot, searing, it blinded, deafened him before it took him.

His recorded audio log would later tell him what Megatron said, "But, I suggest never trusting Starscream. He has a way of finding things out that he shouldn't. Like where your team is and how you hid the all-spark."

Optimus steadily stepped out of stasis once again, somewhat used to the feeling by now.

'Loop 8' he recorded, almost an instinct now.

As the others slowly steadied themselves, Ratchet stared at Optimus, and immediately pushed him back.

"Ratchet what are-" he began.

"You're not going anywhere until we get THAT checked out." Ratchet pushed clumsily again.

Optimus looked down at himself as Ratchet motioned to his chest. Where Megatron stabbed him laid a grey, jagged scar taunting him.

Loop 7. Deception victory. All-spark unbroken. Self-casualty.

Note: mortal injuries scar and transcend loops. Paint will have to do as cover. Avoid death.

A Pipe Dream and Confusing the Team

Chapter Summary

Optimus runs out of ideas, and simply goes through the motions of starting a new loop. Does this include messing with Starscream? Yes.

Ratchet gets suspicious as usual.

Bumblebee gets told off and witnesses something weird.

Chapter Notes

Did you know the events in TFA took place in over 11 years? I didn't.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Loop 53.

FIFTY... three. Big ol' five three. Loopdee doop fifty three. Over three hundred years in total, though Optimus didn't care much for calculating the exact time, he estimated around a century and a half.

Though that didn't really matter, not in any significant way at least. Three hundred years, Three hundred stellar cycles really only made up about a sixth of his life at this point, and cybertronians tended to live much longer than that. He was sure that he had read somewhere that Ultra Magnus was forged something like 14 million stellar cycles ago.

But again such trivial things were not much of importance.

Optimus was out of ideas.

Completely and utterly down to nothing. Though he did spend his spare time doing research on the topic, well as much as he could given earths frankly primitive grasp on quantum mechanics. Between that and keeping his logs up to date it wasn't as if he had nothing to do. Yet he still couldn't bring himself to completely give up.

‘What about doing nothing?’ he often mused to himself. But he couldn’t lie, doing nothing meant unnecessary death. And no matter how many times he went through the repetitive years, the loss of life was something he aimed to prevent, especially if he aimed to have one of these loops become permanent.

As he stepped out of the stasis pod for the fifty third time he slouched but made his way to a control console. His team behind him massaged their helms and stumbled out of their pods as teletran-1 reported foreign matter aboard the ship. Optimus paid no mind to the commotion behind him as he logged what he had recorded from the ending of the past loop

“Um... bossbot?” Bumblebee stated, “We’ve got an issue on the surface...”

Optimus replied robotically and instinctively, “Send teletran-1 out to scan for new alt-modes and have Ratchet analyze the substance found on board. You, Bulkhead, Prowl and I will head up and deal with it when Ratchet finds out how to override it’s programming.”

“It’s...”

“A techno-organic insect that absorbs anything mechanical. It can wait a few more minutes... er... Klicks I assure you Bumblebee.” Optimus waved him off as he continued to type away at the data pad he held.

“I mean I was going to say big, but that works too I guess...” Bumblebee mumbled before taking the hint and walking off.

Optimus finished logging what he could before returning to his team and starting the whole loop over again. Ratchet approached him several minute later stating that the new alt-modes were ready.

Changing his alt-mode was a familiar and welcome feeling at this point. The few minutes he spent at the beginning of each loop in his original alt-mode had started to become awkward as the curves of his plating were unfamiliar. It came as a relief to change back into the transport truck alt he was so familiar with at this point. It always was.

The scars never disappeared. Despite his best efforts he had gained two more sets for a total of six, loop seven being the first followed by loop fifteen and thirty-six respectively. He filed down the metal around them as best as he could to try and disguise them but little could be done without

weakening his chassis permanently or replacing it entirely. So paint would have to do for now.

Ratchet handed him the transmitter as they prepared to exit.

Breaching the surface of Lake Erie and allowing the familiar feel of earth's atmosphere spread over his plating and fill his intakes was routine now along with the events about to unfold. Though Optimus was almost completely sure he could handle the organism himself by this point, he allowed for his team to mostly handle it.

As they arrived where the battle was about to unfold Optimus issued his orders, "Prowl, Bulkhead you two are with me and Bumblebee," He tossed the transmitter to the small yellow bot, "You're on offense."

The yellow bot stared back at him and stammered for a moment before solidifying his grip on the device and standing straight up proudly and running off.

"And us?" Bulkhead asked, raising a servo.

"We're distracting the thing, so let's roll out."

Bulkhead immediately moved and ran forward to join Bumblebee but as Optimus moved to join him he felt a servo move to his forearm. Turning around he found Prowl giving him a concerned look through his visor.

"You're sure Bumblebee can do this?" Prowl shifted his gaze towards the massive organism currently tearing through the docks.

"You have absolutely no idea just how sure I am Prowl." He stated before dashing to join Bulkhead.

The fight went as it always did. And though they may have gotten a bit roughed up things went smoothly.

Officer Fanzone and the other humans squabbled around them excitedly. Optimus stayed quiet

as he often did now and simply observed the chaos occurring around him.

And that's when he saw it, the inspiration he needed.

Renewed and suddenly excited, Optimus Prime smiled.

The next day was the whole 'Robot Saviours' award thing. Optimus supposed he didn't quite understand it even now and such ended up ignoring the speeches as he watched the sky cautiously. The scene in front of him was again all too familiar. The train behind him with Sumdac Tower and the crowd in front of him reminded him it was time to continue his schedule. The recognition ceremony had no formal or military recognition yet it held the spectacle of one. Optimus was sure at one point he had Sari explain the point of it to him but he still lacked to see the relevance of it. Optimus sometimes wondered if this was what peace was like, the ability to recognize civilian heroics rather than military. Though he supposed being giant sentient robots had something to do with it.

Sari had received her key the night before, a necessary precaution to have in case things went wrong with a new plan, not that he had one.

And cue the jets. Optimus watched as the show jets flew in formation, but eyed the one flying behind them.

With a few careful steps Optimus inched to the left before pulling out his axe. His team eyed him cautiously but he ignored their gaze and carefully lined himself up.

Optimus counted the astro-seconds as the planes looped around. And as his chronometer registered the correct moment, he launched his axe up in the air swiftly and waited. Most of the humans around him were watching the planes swirl around and missed the swift motion. But his team and Sari did not. Ratchet gave him a confused and concerned look while the rest simply looked horrified. In response he raised a hand to and motioned for them to wait.

The planes looped and the one Optimus recognized as Starscream broke formation and dove towards them. Bulkhead offered some statement of concern but Optimus didn't hear, and continued to motion for them to wait.

Starscream slowed in front of them, transformed, powered up his null rays and-

SWACK

Optimus' ax landed directly on target, the sharp but powered down end cracking into Starscream's helm splitting it open. Starscream fell still, crashing into the steps leading up to the platform they were on.

Optimus stifled a laugh and turned to his team before clearing his vocalizer and regaining his composure. The flabbergasted looks on their face were somewhat familiar, he had done this several times after all.

Starscream began to groan and pushed himself upwards onto his elbows. He paused for a moment, before slowly reaching up and dragging his finger-digits along the gash in his helm. Starscream examined his servos for a second before looking up to Optimus and glaring at him. The split was small, causing no real damage to the circuitry below it but deep enough to draw energon. The humans around them panicked and as usual fled the scene. Sari and her father stayed behind naturally.

Optimus deployed his grapple and retrieved the ax from where it laid in front of Starscream. Powering it up he twirled it and smirked down at the bot in front of him.

Starscream got the message and transformed, taking off in the opposite direction.

Optimus only then returned his focus back to those still standing behind him.

Optimus returned to a more formal position and reset his vocalizer, "I think we should head back to base. It's been a long few days." He stated before starting to walk towards the old factory.

"Was that a *Decepticon*?" Bumblebee questioned to no one in particular.

Ratchet had noticed a distinct difference in his commanding officer between being put into stasis and coming out of it. He didn't think he would call him aggressive in anyway, nor necessarily cruel but different? Definitely. Optimus seemed stricter, definite in his orders, and less co-operative. It was a large shift from the sappy motivational speeches before the stasis to the distant, quiet mech Optimus was now.

And then there was the matter of the scars. Ratchet was almost completely sure that Optimus had not gone into the stasis pod with them and he was pretty sure a stasis pod couldn't cause injuries like that. Even if they could it was impossible for injuries like that to heal in only 50 stellar cycles. The medical records he had access to confirm there were no major injuries to report during his work as a space bridge technician.

Optimus also seemed to be meticulous about hiding them. What Ratchet had seen of them they seemed to have healed through his self-repair systems as a proper patch done by a medic would have prevented the awkward, thick, grey scars from forming. Optimus painted them over if they so much as got scratched. There were 6 of them in total. Though he couldn't get a closer look due to Optimus' refusal for an exam he had been keeping mental notes about them. They seemed to be in set, two along his back, 2 along his front and two on opposite sides of his torso. If ratchet didn't know any better it seemed to be as if a sword had gone straight through his chassis. And through this Ratchet could really only wonder why.

And he would have continued to brush it off had not seemingly predicted Decepticon attacks. The way he had acted right before starcream-

Ratchet found himself tapping his stylus on a medical report as the soft reset of a vocaliser pulled him from his thoughts.

"Ratchet, I have a request." Optimus stood in the doorway, expression stoic and serious.

Ratchet motioned for Optimus to enter the storage room he was sat in.

Optimus entered slowly. Ratchet took note of the awkward tension in his frame. He put the data pad away and gave a concerned and confused look to the kid.

“This wouldn’t have anything to do with the Starscream incident would it?”

Optimus returned the confused stare, “What? No... No.” Optimus took a long invent before continuing, “It’s about the Orion.”

Ratchet raised an optical ridge, “What about him exactly?”

“I want to propose a set of repairs. With Sari’s key I think it’s possible to get him back up in the air.”

Ratchet gave a small hum before responding, “Starscream shows up and suddenly you’re in a rush to get off planet? I’m assuming you’ve already tried to make a report to the elite guard about Starscream?”

“Well, not exactly,” Optimus shifted uncomfortably, “Not that communications are working anyways.” Ratchet almost missed him mumble the second half.

“So what you’re telling me,” Ratchet took a step towards Optimus, “That you plan on fixing the Orion and heading back to Cybertron without orders, and without retrieval codes from the Spacebridge Nexus?” Ratchet glared. “This coming for a mech who always goes by the book?”

Optimus rubbed his comm array in a mix of what Ratchet could tell was frustration and awkwardness, “Isn’t it somewhat cruel to not revive Omega Supreme when given the chance?”

Ratchet felt the air exit his vents. Optimus flinched in return as Ratchet assumed his EM field went wild.

"Primus Optimus what has gotten into you? Look I've been putting up with this for the last while 'cause it's all been working out for us but I'm not putting up with this any longer! You can either tell me exactly what's going on or I will drag you to the med bay and figure this out myself while you're in stasis lock!"

Optimus froze, "You.... Noticed?"

Optimus was not suspecting that. Well, in a sense he understood bringing Omega supreme into things without him supposedly knowing he was alive would make Ratchet upset. But Ratchet hadn't... called him out before. Not like this.

"Of course I fragging well noticed! Now you're gonna tell me exactly how you know things you ain't supposed to. And I ain't just talking about Omega here. I'm talking how you know when the Decepticons are gonna attack and this ridiculous request to go back home when you know fragging well that the Decepticons are here!"

Optimus stayed silent collecting himself before ratchet noticed his spinal strut relax.

"Well kid?" The medic crossed his arms and tapped his foot impatiently.

Optimus took a breath, "Ratchet, I understand you have concerns regarding my current behavior but if you could just give me some time-"

"So what? You can run off and pull another Starscream stunt? Nu-uh. We're sitting down right now." Ratchet pointed towards the med bay, "and while we're there I'm giving you that physical you keep avoiding."

"But-"

"No buts. If you're going to bring up information you got no business knowing, you're going to explain why. Now March soldier." Ratchet allowed his EM field another moment to reach his commanding officer, a small warning.

And so Optimus did as he was told.

Bumblebee jogged towards the back of the warehouse. After the Ceremony that day Optimus

had asked him and Prowl to take Sari home and look for any signs for Starscream along the way (Though Bumblebee thought it sounded more like an afterthought). They had done so, though Sari had complained about wanting to ask Prime about the crazy stunt he pulled. To be completely honest Bee was probably racing home for the exact same reason though his mind was mostly a buzz of thoughts back to his cadet days. Seeing a Decepticon (Ratchet had been the one to confirm it) renewed his old interest in fighting for Cybertron and serving in the Elite Guard.

He spent the drive back to the base in silence simply thinking but came to a conclusion as he pulled into base. He needed to speak to Prime.

He transformed, parting ways with Prowl and made his way inside, beginning his search. It only took him minutes to spot his commander, Optimus was walking slowly toward their new makeshift med bay, Ratchet not far behind.

"Bossbot!" He yelled, running toward the two bots ahead of him, "You've gotta tell me what that was about today!"

Optimus gave him an odd look, "I'd love to bumblebee-"

Ratchet reset his vocalizer, "He can talk to you later Bee," he stated and then placed a hand on Optimus' back. Apparently Optimus got some sort of silent point and continued forward, into the med bay.

"Wait for me!"

Ratchet stood in the med bay door and stopped Bumblebee as he attempted to enter.

"I'm doing a physical Bumblebee. I'm sure Optimus doesn't want ya prying into his personal business, he can talk to you later."

"I actually wouldn't mind-" Optimus started before Ratchet gave him a glare, silencing the red and blue mech.

Ratchet turned back to Bumblebee and waved his hand dismissively, "Go out on patrol or something. We'll be setting up some sort of permanent schedule I'm sure." and with that, the makeshift med bay doors closed.

Bumblebee stood for a moment, disappointed and unsure of what to do. Balling up his fists he made his decision.

"Fine! Maybe I will then!" and with that he exited the base, passing Prowl and Bulkhead as he went.

Speed had always helped Bee calm down. Sari had taken the time to explain some of the odd road laws earlier that day as he drove her home. Though now, as the earth entered its lunar half of the day, as the sky gleamed in vibrant colour Bee really enjoyed the roads had become quiet, allowing Bee to let loose for a bit. He passed the few other vehicles easily and kept his optics on the sky. Though Ratchet had been a crank case and dismissed him he still might as well keep his optics out for the Decepticons.

Decepticons.

Here on earth.

Bee passed another driver on the 'highway' (he was sure that's what Sari had called it). He had dreamed of this day since before the academy, being part of a crew and travelling the expanses of space fighting back against Decepticon outbreaks along the edges of Autobot territory. And now, even though he was part of some small repair crew he was finally given the chance to see action. Even though it had only been a seeker today, they were guarding the *Allspark* and Bumblebee was sure there would be definitely more Decepticons to come looking for that. And he hadn't forgotten their encounter with Megatron before stasis.

A glint in the sky above the outskirts of the city suddenly demanded his attention. The two trailing streams of light almost blended into the horizon. But Bee recognized them, though not completely identical they resembled transport drones entering the atmosphere. Bumblebee used to watch them land distantly in the docks, pretending they were stars, as Cybertron's atmosphere had become too dense to see cosmic bodies besides Sol and their two moons from the surface.

But drones should not be landing on Earth.

So Bee decided the best course of action was to investigate, revving his engine he took off at top speed.

Following the direction of the trailing lights had lead him past he boarders of Detroit and into the surrounding woods. There, he had begun seeing several broken treetops, as something large had attempted to slow a little too late.

Something Decepticon large.

Bee pressed forward too enamored with the prospect of finding a possible Decepticon to comm anyone with actual authority. And as the broken trees veered away from the road Bee switched to root mode to continue following them into the woods. Half a mile (Bee found the tiny mile counter that came with his new alt mode actually kind of useful actually) into the woods Bumblebee came across a small clearing. Evidence of thruster scorch marks lined the area and a residual heat emanated not only from the ground but the deciduous trees around the area. Whatever-whomever had landed her had landed only klicks before. Bee transformed his servos into stingers as a fear suddenly creeped up on him as he noticed a purple paint mark on one of the organic flora.

The confidence driving his had likely come from Optimus' show earlier but now, faced alone against what was most certainly one if not two Decepticons in a forest where light was increasingly disappearing with bright yellow painting, Bubmlebee was suddenly realizing that this may not have been the wisest of choices. Tentatively, moving towards the center of the opening Bee moved his fingers to his comm array and-

Suddenly Bee was face first in the grained sediment on the ground, a pressure keeping him face down on his back. His processor spun for a moment before he could focus. Turning his helm to the side he was met with a purple and grey bot with red faceplates.

"Vere is ze Allspark tiny Autobot?"

Chapter End Notes

Whoo! This chapter fought me the entire way (not to mention i had to go back and re-watch the first few episodes) but at least now i have a better understanding where this is all going. The action at this point is a little lacking, but i find it kinda hard to write scenes that already exist 10/10 will work on it. This is also somewhat where this fic will stop following the show exactly, though Optimus will make A LOT of references to the original timeline.

Next chapter;

Optimus and Ratchet have a talk before Optimus realizes he forgot something REALLY important about his schedule.

The 'Bee' plot continues, with mixed results.

Megatron gets confused.

Thanks for all the comments and support!

Talking, Talking, Dismemberment

Chapter Summary

Optimus and Ratchet have a talk.

Blitzwing decides chivalry ISN'T dead.

Megatron wants to puke.

Chapter Notes

WHEW

Honestly it takes me 2 days to write the Optimus' parts and then the rest of a week to write Bumblebee's. I blame him.

Also Fuck indenting.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

"Alright, start talking." Ratchet's hands were cold as he accessed Optimus' medical port. The makeshift med-bay was sparse compared to the one on Omega Supreme. Large warehouse metal sheets served as a crude medical berth that Optimus now laid on. Basic equipment had been moved into the room; a spark monitor, storage containers with field patches, basic welding equipment, things only of use in minor situations. Optimus made the mental note to have Bulkhead and Prowl move up more when they had the chance.

"I don't know exactly what you expect me to say." Optimus admitted. Sure, he had to have had these conversations in past loops, but most of them had been more of a 'How did you know my plan foolish Autobot' followed by some sort of blow to the helm. The calm, quiet environment was off-putting.

And sure, Optimus had noticed Ratchet's constantly watching optics in most if not all loops but the medic had never actually approached the subject. Optimus made another mental note to review his notes and narrow down exactly what the difference was, though his suspicions lied on the mention of Omega Supreme.

"Well ya can start with how you knew about Omega Supreme." Yes. Definitely the mention of Omega then Optimus noted, "If I remember correctly no one 'cept me was supposed to know about him on this team," Ratchet looked over the data he received as he talked.

“Ratchet-”

“Before you start yapping let me remind you Omega is my ward so you report to me when it comes to him.”

"No one from Cybertron is watching you and Omega, Ratchet," the medic visibly bristled at Optimus' words, "I can across the information myself. I mean the engine room does have something suspiciously resembling a spark chamber in it."

Ratchet looked up for a moment to shoot him a glare, "You know I ain't buying that kid."

Ratchets eyes shifted briefly to one of Optimus' scars. Ratchet made a motion to them with his free servo, the question obvious. Optimus hesitated but nodded.

"I'm already in a pile of crap, you might as well."

Ratchet raised an optic ridge, "crap?"

"It's a human term, it's roughly the equivalent for 'slag'," Optimus explained, "though the organic life here have a much more... varied in their inappropriate language."

The medic rolled his optics before placing his free servo on the red chasis Infront of him. Delicately he flaked the paint off the metal, revealing the discoloured metal underneath.

"Ya should really use a primer on these if you want the paint to stick," Ratchet ran his thumb over the scar softly.

Optimus shivered at the touch tensing up, "It's something to do with my time."

"So are you gonna explain or am I going to have to-"

"Look, it's some sort of quantum anomaly I can't explain yet. Some sort of... I've been calling them time loops. Though I'm sure there's some sort of more technical name for them," Optimus interrupted, "I know about Omega because we've revived him before. Several times actually. I know the exact second Starscream shows up because the last 53 loops he shows up at the exact same moment. Does that put your mind at ease?"

Optimus nudged the medic's hand and crossed his arms, allowing his EM field a moment to prickle at the medic before reigning it in. Optimus couldn't understand his own outburst, but allowed himself to blame the frustration of the confinement of the loop. It wasn't as if Ratchet would remember this in 10 years anyways.

The medic stayed silent for a minute, before running his hand down his faceplates.

"Can we try that again WITHOUT the human terms. Please."

Optimus allowed a puff of air out of his vents before continuing, "mind, the equivalent to processor. A second is around... 4 nanoklicks. Though the conversion isn't exact."

The medic went silent again, no doubt translating the terms over, to have a full grasp at the meaning of the sentence.

"I'd like to do a full processor scan," the medic moved over to a box in the back of the room, "I think your memory module has a feedback loop... Or something else... A magnetic issue..." The medic rambled to himself.

Optimus rolled his optics, "I have 300 years of report logs if that would convince you."

Ratchet turned back to the mechanic on the slab in the middle of the room and paused, "...300 years?"

"I said it was 53 loops didn't I? It's something like 300. I never really counted."

"Let me see."

Optimus pulled out a data pad from his subspace and handed it to Ratchet, who immediately looked through the files inside.

"That's 11-17. I've got more."

Ratchet stayed silent for a long moment, looking over the pad and the data it provided.

"I'm too old for this slag," The medic finally relented yet kept his eyes on the data pad "loop 15...."

Optimus swung his legs over the side of the medical berth, putting himself in a more direct position to talk to Ratchet. Hey tapped on the scar Ratchet had scratched the paint off, "The Decepticons don't like deserters. Turns out there's a justice division to handle them, and they'll take you right back to their glorious leader."

"You've worked for the Decepticons...?" The medic swiftly pushed him back into the right position on the berth and returned his attention to the scars on his chassis. Ratchet swiftly uncovered the others.

Optimus shrugged, "Never for long. I generally end up leaving them or they kill me."

Ratchet's attention swiftly went to lining the scars up, "they go straight through... Can you open your chest plating?" He was frantic almost, the data pad swiftly forgotten on the berth beside him.

Optimus did as he was told, the soft blue light of his spark filled the room. Though the spark wasn't what Ratchet was focused on. Optimus looked away as Ratchet examined the inner casing of the chamber itself.

6 scars lined the inside walls, directly lining up with their outer counterparts.

"You should be offline." The medic mumbled under his breath.

Optimus closed his chest plate and took a moment to cycle the hot air out of his system, "And yet here I am. Really, a human gets a magical key that can heal any bot and this is too far-fetched for you?"

The room fell into silence once again. Ratchet shuttered his optics for a moment before opening them again.

"This would explain Starscream and Omega. So, where do you go from here exactly."

"I think," Optimus sat up once again, "The Iacon hall of records may help. The humans have developed this thing call the internet, there are advertisements for websites everywhere. You use them to ask questions. If any information can be found about this, it's there."

"So you wanted to revive Omega Supreme to get back to Cybertron..." Ratchet tapped his fingers in the table, "you plan to just let the Decepticons just run wild here?"

"Starscream and Blitzwing would probably try to follow us with the All-spark. Lugnut would probably obsess over getting Megatron up and running which is going to take a few months at LEAST..." Optimus shot up to his pedes and turned to Ratchet.

The room felt painstakingly quiet as realization crossed over Prime's face.

"HOLY CRAP I FORGOT MEGATRON," And with that, he was out of the med bay.

Bumblebee gripped at the ground under him, the pressure on his back struts encouraging panic to continue to climb into his system. There was another sound behind him and Bumblebee craned in an unsuccessful attempt to find the source.

"Blitzwing!" a new voice, much louder than the last, "What are you doing?!"

An odd *click-whirr* sounded above him, "It's one of ze Autobots from fifty stellar cycles ago if I am correct." The once angry voice was now calm, and the once red faceplates above him now blue.

The new mech moved into view, his hulking purple frame bending down towards Bee, “Where is our glorious leader?!”

“Ack-!” The pressure on Bumblebee’s back increased, “I-I don’t know what you’re talking about!”

“Focus on ze All-spark vould you Lugnut? Megatron’s remains can be reclaimed later, ze All-spark may not.”

“If the Autobots are here so should what remains of our Master!”

The mech on top of Bumblebee met Bee’s optics for a moment before rolling them and returning his gaze to Decepticon brother.

Was- was the Decepticon trying to tell him something?

“So where is HE?” The larger Decepticon once again brought his attention to Bumblebee.

Bee looked up at the bot with the heavy accent only to find optics looking back at him. There was a shift above him (Bee could tell it was a sort of heavy ventilation) and the optics rolled again, the message this time was clear ‘I’m done with this slag.’

“Vhy Strika let you come back to zis miserable planet vith me, I vill have no idea.” Another *click-whir* and this time the faceplates above him were black this time, “Actually I may have an idea! *HAHA!*”

The servo that held him down suddenly lifted. Bee took the moment to flip himself around only to realize *why* the servo had lifted. The bot- *Blitzwing* had raised the servo to his lips and placed his long, winding tongue between his pointer and middle digits. The other war frame- *Lugnut* apparently didn’t find it amusing and immediately charged the other.

The charge knocked Blitzwing over and the two Decepticons went tumbling to the edge of the scorched clearing. Bumblebee finally remembered himself and took the moment to dart into the woods on the opposite side of the clearing.

The woods were dark and with only his optic light to guide him Bumblebee fumbled his way through the woods. Fallen organic matter not only tripped him every few strides but prevented him

from using his wheels in any useful way.

The sound of jet engines had Bumblebee attempting to move faster. The soft crunch of leaves quickly turned into loud crashes as the fumbling pace turned into plowing through anything that he came into contact with. A cool breeze was about all the warning he received before a sudden burning cold collided against his systems.

The cold was intrusive to his systems, not to mention Bee was now completely stuck to the forest floor, once again face first on the ground. His helm had been spared the ice but the rest of him hadn't. The sound of engines became louder before cutting completely. A large *thunk* sounded as one of the Decepticons landed cracking the ice around Bumblebee slightly, yet not enough to loosen the restraint.

“Now zat Lugnut is gone we can have zis talk in peace.” Blitzwing. Great.

“The less of there you are the better!” *Shut up. Shut up. Shut up.*

Click-whir, “They’ll be one les of jou if jou don’t tell me vere the All-spark is foolish Autobot!”

Bumblebee couldn't see the Decepticon standing behind him but he instinctively knew the red face was back. The cold had begun to seep into his frame now. His combustion tank being the only source of heat, a warning popped up in his internal display ‘*Energon Viscosity Reduced*’. Nothing critical, but it made quick movement much harder, though at the moment he couldn't move much at all.

A nervous laugh escaped his vocalizer, “Haha, and why would I know where the All-spark is?” *That wasn't convincing at all.*

Click-whir, “Jou and your Sqvad vere last seen with the thing. And besides, zere was a signal from ze zing not to long ago.”

Bee let out another nervous laugh, “Squad? N-no you got it wrong! We're space bridge repair bots!”

Blitzwing moved to a place where Bumblebee could see him and crouched down, tapping his pointer digit over the ice on the ice covering Bumblebee's backstrut.

“Zen explain to me how exactly a space bridge repair crew takes down the Decepticon leader?”

“O-oh Optimus? He- uh he spent some time in the academy! L-look I’m not even equipped with combat grade stingers! You can check!”

Blitzwing did check, his blue faceplates focused as he cracked one of Bee’s servos free and examined it.

Click-Whir, “HAHA! Space bridge repair bots! At least this will be short!” A Black faceplate and bright red optics glared at him as soft but manic laughter filled the woods.

“Space brige repair bots who kept the All-Spark away from you crank-shafts!” *SHUT UP*.

Click-whir, Blitwing’s face was blue again, “Perhaps,” The Decepticon stood and took a step back, “Zo, now I am more interested how civilians got their hands on such an important weapon.”

“It- uh- fell into our servos.” Bumblebee offered.

The Decepticon began picking at the ice around the yellow mech “Unlikely. Let’s make a deal zen repair bot.”

“Bumblebee.”

“Okay zen Bumblebee. How about jou take me to your commanding officer-”

“Optimus Prime.”

Click-Whir, “Shut your faceplates tiny Autobot!”

Click-Whir, ”Take me to Optimus Prime and maybe we can settle zis without resorting to anyzing too violent.”

“Optimus won’t let you have the All-spark.”

“Vell I’m not about to torture a tiny yellow civilian. So it’s either zat or I offline you now and join Lugnut looking at ze last signal point.” The Decepticon shrugged.

“Talking to Prime it is!” Bee let out a nerous laugh once again, and suddenly the ice around him was being chipped away.

The All-spark wasn’t as heavy as he had expected the first time he had picked it up. Its weight was now familiar as he carried it on the bed of his alt mode. His headlights illuminated the road in front of him, cutting the darkness as he drove to Sumdac Tower. The drive seemed surreal as though he had come to terms with what he was about to do yet Optimus found the entire situation odd still.

Optimus arrived at Sumdac Tower swiftly, the realization he had forgotten something so crucial accelerated the pace he would have usually taken.

Making the way through Sumdac tower undetected for the Fifty third time was almost second nature to Optimus even while carrying the All-spark. Though his frame was definitely not made for stealth his knowledge of the building significantly made up for it. The placements of the cameras were familiar and so were not an issue any more. The hallways were built large, made for Sumdac’s robots and large equipment to easily fit through which made them the perfect size for Optimus to make his way through comfortably. Reaching Sumdac’s private lab couldn’t have been easier.

Entering the correct sequence of digits allowed him access to the lab, though he had to duck through the door.

Optimus placed the All-Spark down and looked towards the severed head of his foe.

Optimus had discovered this particularity when he first started taking down Starscream. Turns out without the key reviving him during his first fight in Detroit, Megatron himself wasn’t brought

back online resulting in a huge Decepticon power struggle. The resulting loop was a cluster of different Decepticons flocking to earth to retrieve the All-spark and gain control of their disbanded forces. So, in the end Optimus had resigned to facing an evil he knew rather than multiple he didn't.

Megatron's head sat at the back of the lab, equipment and Megatron's internals lined the room and his severed hand sat in front of several monitors. It was a grim and frankly disgusting display of the resilience of war frames. Well that or Sumdac's genius.

Optimus ran his hand along the hand of his enemy before taking a long invent, "Here we go again."

Optimus moved towards the All-spark again and bent down, grabbing both handles and pulling. The light that filled the room was soft for a moment before turning electric blue. Energy shot up from the container and jumped across the circuitry in the lab. Optimus stepped back and after a few minutes the light show ceased and the All-spark's container snapped back onto itself. The dark of the room was oppressive, before suddenly red optics illuminated the back of the lab.

It took a moment but Megatron's vocalizer to begin to glitch and reset. Optimus moved and picked up the container.

"Where am I?" a gruff, but familiar voice rumbled, "Where is my *body*?"

Optimus took another invent before walking to the door and punching the access code in once again.

"Autobot?"

And with that Optimus left the room.

The Autobot shut the door leaving Megatron completely in the dark and cold room. His optics worked fine it the dim light casted from the monitors yet it still lent an air of macabre to the room. His right hand sat across the room in front of him, it had regrettably been the first thing he had

seen. He would have purged his tanks had it been possible at the time. Now that the Autobot had left the room he had time to look around.

If he could he would have purged again.

Looking at one's own internals line some sort of scientific research facility was jarring, especially if the Autobot responsible had just walked out of the room ancient artifact in tow.

"What kind of antiquated system am I hooked into..." The thought fell off his glossa.

Megatron took a moment to collect himself and examine the lab he was in with more detail. One wall contained several monitors, displaying some sort of large settlement with several Autobots on screen. He recognized the red and blue Autobot immediately followed by Starscream.

The Autobot threw an axe and several minutes it incapacitated his SIC, who swiftly retreated very typically.

A sudden anger filled his limited circuits, "**Curse this infernal lab!**" Though limited in what he could do physically a sudden burst of energy surged forth and broke several overhead lights.

Megatron once again took a moment to ground himself. Pausing for a moment he stretched out his reach of the lab as best as he could. Reasoning if he could overload lights he could do much more. Testing what he could and couldn't move in the lab passed several cycles.

Megatron at last took a moment to question, exhausting what he could do physically at the moment.

The Autobot was odd. Given the appearance of both him and the All-spark upon his revival... it stands to reason there must have been some sort of connection. Though it stood to reason the Autobot likely didn't revive him on purpose.

Megatron moved one of the claw like contraptions along the walls to the best of his ability and picked up one of the small drones sitting around the lab.

“Let us see what you are up to Autobot.”

Chapter End Notes

If it wasn't clear, Optimus got his idea from an online library add near Sumdac tower.

There is SO MUCH TALKING in this chapter i am sorry Jesus. Thank you so much for all of the awesome feed back and support everyone! It is amazing to get this much attention so quickly.

Up Next;

Optimus squishes a bug before a Bee becomes his main concern.

Ratchet looks through some more logs and a plan begins to form between him and his commanding officer.

Someone please send Megatron some help or something.

Some things Not Right

Chapter Summary

Optimus prime describes his love for sunrises.

Bumblebee and Blitzwing enjoy Nicknames.

Ratchet is angry but provides context anyways.

Megatron has no idea what's happening at all.

The Autobots need to roll out.

Chapter Notes

Little longer of a chapter to make up the delay.

Also 5 shorter sections instead of 3 long ones because writing is hard.

Also a little angst. just a little.

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Optimus enjoyed the beginnings of the day. Even after missing his usual nightly stasis nap, there was just something about how earth's star looked as it came up on the horizon that simply lifted his spirits. Cybertron's ozone simply did not reflect light in the same soft pastels that earth's did. It was one of the few things he wasn't quite bored of yet. That, and earth's literature.

"What are you doing out here?" His thoughts must have prevented him from hearing the approaching mech. Optimus turned from his place leaning against a pillar outside their makeshift base to see Prowl tentatively approaching him.

The ninja bot's eyes stuck to Optimus' still uncovered scars. Optimus ignored his gaze and responded.

"Waiting." Optimus turned back to watching the outside of their base diligently. He wouldn't admit it now, not when the context would be lost on Prowl, but his patience always helped Optimus in these moments. Optimus was thankful he had taken the time to mediate with the ninja bot in the past as it truly made waiting for events to happen bearable.

"For what exactly?" The ninja bot hesitated for a moment, "If you don't mind me asking."

"You're welcome to stay and find out if you want." Optimus shrugged. His gaze didn't falter off the small concrete area in front of their base. Though his timing was off last night surely Megatron would keep to his old tricks...

Prowl found a perch on top of some of the crates still littered about the lot and sat cross-legged. The sun continued its display as both mecha took in the first rays of light.

Optimus held onto these moments, the moments when someone he's lost, which was almost everyone at least once by now, had a quiet moment with him.

"You should look into the other organic life on this planet. I think you'd enjoy their oddities." Optimus offered after several moments of silence. Prowl wasn't one for long or in depth conversations, but it beat waiting in silence anyways.

Prowl gave him a confused look, "Like the winged organics? They are quite peculiar."

Optimus suppressed a chuckle, "Earth has a lot of them, and you'd like them. The 'winged organics' are called birds."

"Birds?"

Optimus nodded.

Prowl responded once more but Optimus had suddenly lost focus. A small, almost unnoticeable movement had caught his optic from the far side of the lot.

Optimus made his way over to the movement and swiftly picked up the small sentry drone.

Turns out Megatron stuck to the same old tricks.

Without hesitation he crushed the thing in his hand and looked back to Prowl. Prowl had since taken a few steps forward and now stood behind Prime, craning his neck to see what his superior officer had in his palm.

Optimus offered the crushed drone to Prowl.

"One of Professor Sumdac's drones?"

Optimus nodded, "not sent by Sumdac though."

"Well who else would-"

Optimus interrupted, "Decepticons. It's not as if we're hiding our autobot signatures in any way." A half truth, it *was* sent by a Decepticon but he wasn't about to admit it was him that lead the thing back here, though it would have found them eventually.

Optimus placed the destroyed drone into the ninja bot's hands before walking towards the entrance to the base. Prowl followed.

"How did you know it was coming? How did you know *Starscream* was coming?"

Ah. So that's why Prowl had come out in the first place.

Optimus paused and turned to the mech behind him. Prowl looked concerned and confused as he held onto the drone carefully, cupping it in his hands.

Optimus placed a hand on his shoulder, "It doesn't matter. You won't remember this in a few years anyways."

Optimus offered a reassuring smile before walking into the base, leaving the ninja bot alone and very confused.

The pastels of the morning had turned mostly to blue, signalling the start of a new day.

“Zis is ridiculous.”

“I told you I couldn’t remember the way unless I was on a road!”

Bumblebee shifted the best of his ability could given his current altitude. Bee had his arms around the neck of the triple changer and the rest of his body dangled along his back. When Blitzwing had offered to carry him his immediate reaction had been furious denial. But the Decepticon was also completely opposed to walking, and his Alt-mode would likely be extremely out of place.

The solution ended up being this; a tiny yellow Autobot clinging to a significantly larger Decepticon (Bumblebee was NOT being carried). And to top it off, they were lost.

Bee clambered his legs once again, attempting to find a better position as his arms complained of over use.

Click-Whir “I told you to stop zat Autobot! Move again and I VILL drop jou!”

“You wouldn’t dare!”

“Maybe if jou had any sense of direction zis wouldn’t be an issue!”

“I have a great sense of direction when my pedes are on the ground!” Bumblebee yelled over the sounds of the triple changer’s engines. Well, okay maybe if he had to admit it he was yelling for several different reasons (fear and anger being the main reasons amongst them).

Suddenly they were descending. Bumblebee’s tanks lurched at the sudden change and now he was yelling for an entirely new reason. The movement stopped, a warning blaring in his processor mentioning purging was all he could process before Blitzwing leaned back and the pistons in Bumblebee’s arms gave out. Bumblebee hit the hard surface below him with a small ‘ouff’.

Click-Whir. Blue face plates stared down at him, “Is zis better zen?”

Bumblebee groaned and rolled onto the front of his chassis before crawling up on all fours and looking around. They were still high up, that was given but as he looked around Bumblebee could tell they were on some sort of tall building. Bumblebee stood slowly and looked up the Decepticon in front of him.

And then he purged.

When he looked up again the faceplates were no longer blue but were replaced with black ones. A red smile spoke through a giggle, “Does ze Autobot not have the tanks for flying?”

Jeez these face changes were getting confusing.

Wiping his intake Bumblebee spat back, “I can handle flying! You’re just really bad at landing! My gyroscope is just sensitive is all!”

The black face above him burst into a round of hysterics, “Zey sure don’t make jou Autobots like zey used to!”

“It’s not funny! And what’s that supposed to mean?! I’m a scout model! I wasn’t built for flying!” Bumblebee hissed out.

Click-Whirr. Great, blue again. Bumblebee groaned. At least he could define the personalities now. Blue was emotionless, red was angry, and black just said whatever. Bumblebee mused about nicknames for a moment before he realized the other was talking.

“- look like a small version of a late scout model now zat I zink about it.”

“A what?”

“A late scout model. Zey were discontinued in preference for sturdier war frame models at ze beginning of ze full on war.” Blitzwing looked longingly for a moment before blinking and returning his gaze back to the small yellow bot in front of him, “But zat is not ze point. Can you just point out your base so I can sort out zis whole mess?”

Bumblebee moved over to the edge and gazed around, “Um... Well there’s Sumdac tower. It’s somewhere around there I think.”

There was a long drawn out invent behind him, “Civilians I swear...”

“I heard that!” Bumblebee snapped, “And for the record Optimus isn’t going to hand over the Allspark so easily!”

“Ve vill see about zat.” Bumblebee turned to catch a small smirk on the triple changers face.

Bumblebee glared, “I mean it Blitzbrain!”

Click-Whirr. Oh god the black face and the red eyes again, “HAHA! Blitzbrain! Nice vone Bumblebot!”

“Bumblebot!” Bumblebee stamped his foot and grumbled.

“Ze Bumblebot doesn’t like ze nickname? You look almost as mad as Screamer vas!” Another bought of laughter came from Blitzwing.

Bumblebee stifled his own laughter, “Screamer?”

Click-Whirr. The stoic blue face reappeared, “Ve should go now.”

A large hand suddenly wrapped itself around Bumblebee’s waist, “Hey! You know talking to you is really difficult! Put me down!”

Blitzwing offered a very soft and small smile, “I know. Now let’s go.”

The med bay was at least more organized when he finally returned to it. Ratchet sat one of the large storage crates left over, the data pad Optimus had forgotten clutched in his hands. Ratchet apparently was too engrossed in reading the thing to notice Prime enter the room. Optimus reset his Vocalizer.

Ratchet immediately looked up, "you revive Megatron every time?!"

"Did you even slee-uh... Go into stasis last night?" Optimus sighed out.

Ratchet motioned to the data pad in his hand, "You revive the Slagmaker every time? That's why you burst out last night?" Ratchet seemed less angry than exacerbated but still miffed to say the least.

Optimus absentmindedly rubbed his communications array and shuttered his optics for a moment, "For goodness... Look Ratchet it's either Megatron or an army of Decepticons. I can put together some sort of data packet explaining this when I have a moment but I'd rather get back to our conversation that I attempted to start 12 hours ago and then get some well-earned sleep."

The medic stood and crossed his arms, "Even if we got Omega up in the air again there's still four Decepticon elite still here on earth!"

"It will take us years to deal with them Ratchet. You've read my logs," Optimus frowned.

Ratchet returned his gaze to the data pad in his hands and grumbled, "The elite guard come at some point don't they?"

Optimus sighed again before putting his hand over the data pad, "The elite guard is a horrible option. Not only will they not believe us about the Decepticons showing up but if we can somehow convince them to take us back to Cybertron we'd still be constrained by time. I can only stay on Cybertron as long as I can stay awake."

"...what?"

"Every time I enter stasis on Cybertron the loop resets. Even if by some miracle we go back with

Sentinel and Ultra Magnus I'm not even going to have the chance to set foot in the hall of records."

Ratchet took a moment to process before looking Optimus straight in the optics, "You want to sneak onto Cybertron." He deadpanned.

Optimus nodded, "Autobot procedure wouldn't give me the chance-"

"You talk like you aren't one of us."

Optimus fell silent.

"Firstly I find out that you've worked with the Decepticons in all this, then you revive Megatron Lord of Destruction for some odd reason, and now you want to sneak onto Cybertron in a revived warship."

"Ratchet, please." Optimus took a step back from the medic, "the longest I've stayed on Cybertron is 12 earth hours. I've only seen glances of Cybertron in the last Three hundred years."

"Home. You haven't seen home in three hundred years." Ratchet took a long, loud breath, "I need some time."

The medic handed Optimus the data pad. Before turning away and sifting through the crate he had been sitting on.

Optimus bulked up to say something, thought better of it and exited the med bay.

This situation seemed familiar.

Optimus' rantings seemed familiar.

Ratchet was young when the new order of Council members had been sworn in. Ratchet could remember exactly how ecstatic the whole of Cybertron had been. Barely beginning his first years of basic repair and the council under Nova Prime was on its way out, a new bot at its head.

Nova Prime had been a horrible ruler near the end but it was his failings in dealing with the rowdy and violent war-frame uprisings had put the nails in his coffin. He had begun his rule at the end of the golden age, if Ratchet could remember correctly and was mainly blamed for the beginning of Cybertrons decline.

At least that was what the speeches held after his resignation had implied. It was so bad that his entire council had been removed, one of them was even found to be sympathetic to the war frames cause. Empurata was the mech's punishment.

Senator Shockwave aside, Ratchet focused himself on the days following Nova's removal from office. They were a blur really, mostly an uproar of scandals and speeches as new Senators took stage, the others were never heard from again.

Ultra Magnus, the new military commander had been the one to report that Nova had stolen the matrix of leadership and had swiftly gone missing afterwards. The entire planet, minus Kaon and its surrounding highly War-frame populated cities were on high alert as both military and police searched for the missing Prime. It was assumed he had run to Kaon, to seek protection under the rebellion leader. Ratchet couldn't remember his name exactly, but that wasn't important.

Years down the line, after Ratchet had completed his training yet before the War-frames, not yet the Decepticons, had fled for the colonies Ratchet found himself working in one of the outskirt cities. Bordering both the Council run and War-frame run territories Ratchet found safety from the army draft now imposed on all Cybertronians.

Working in a rundown med bay by himself amongst those too drugged to serve the army or too poor to buy their way out was hard work. Often his patients were half maimed or too far addicted to substances he had never heard of to take care of themselves after discharged. The work was grueling but at least he was making a difference somewhere without encouraging the war further.

The term "Prime" had also taken a large shift. Far from the supreme rulers they used to be Primes were now no more than a military position under the Magnus. Likely then, history records wouldn't have to be changed but rather the context they were read in gave them whole new meanings. Gone were the heroic decisions of Cybertron's great rulers and in were the actions of effective military leaders.

Though he didn't admit it Ratchet followed the politics the best he could in the Dead End.

Ratchet didn't recognize the plating of his patient at first. The large mech had stumbled in completely intoxicated, and had promptly fallen on the floor.

His plating was dull, and there was a large scar above his spark chamber but Ratchet had learned to not ask questions.

The Mech had begun mumbling something inaudible as Ratchet had pumped his systems. But the more clean medical grade he pumped into him and the more swill he pumped out the more clear the rambling mech became.

"He won't let me go!" The bot began, "it's been a thousand years and I just keep restating and restarting the same infernal years!"

The mech was obviously delusional but his tone was unmistakably desperate, "He's punishing me! I let them take it from me and now Primus must be angry!!"

He lurched from the table, "Every time I wake up it's happening all over again! The tearing, the burning!"

Ratchet steadily pulled him back into the med berth and sighed inwardly, this was not an uncommon sight.

The mech suddenly turned to him, his eyes glossed over and dim, "You must believe me," the bot whispered, "They still have it. They say I stole the thing, but it was them. They took it from me and now Primus has forsaken me."

The mech fell into stasis not long after.

It was the next day when the mysterious mech was preparing to leave that he finally spoke to Ratchet again.

"Can I have your designation please?" Ratchet had asked, opening a new file for the bot.

"Nova."

Ratchet looked over the bot, "like the Prime?"

His optics were downcast but at least more clear, "No. Just Nova."

"Now can you just fill out a few things-"

The bot stood up and headed toward the exit, passing Ratchet and grumbling on his way.

"Excuse me really it just a few-"

The bot turned and look at him completely stoic before sighing and taking the data pad from Ratchet and filling in the missing data.

Ratchet remembered looking down at the form and blinking a few times, "occupation... 'Cybertron's most wanted' isnt a valid occupation...People usually just put none ya know."

The mech simply smiled, "A joke to myself I suppose. *It doesn't matter. You won't remember this in a few years anyways.*"

Ratchet shook himself from his thoughts before returning to the present.

Sometimes Optimus just brought back such odd memories.

Megatron was confused more by the Autobots discovery of his drone. The thing had been tiny, small even by human standards, and should have been easy enough to get into the Autobot base. If it didn't seem impossible Megatron would have guessed the Autobot would have known the drone

was coming. Perhaps the Autobot was more perceptive than first thought.

For the brief sightings Megatron had seen the Autobot he could tell only a few things. The mech wasn't Elite Guard, there were no telltale red wings around his insignia but he was likely military, seeing by the way he fought. Anything else he could analyze made absolutely no sense. The red and blue mech had after all brought the All-Spark here and restarted his circuitry.

Now Megatron liked to think he was a smart mech, but none of this made any sense.

Megatron had resigned himself to his situation in the lab. 'Resigned' being a loose term; Megatron had been in worse situations and found his way out of them given planning and patience. Video feeds from this 'Professor Sumdac', an organic he had yet to fully meet but was mentioned on almost every file Megatron could get access to, and his drones proved to be the best way to survey his surroundings.

Upon further inspection of these video feeds had provided a couple of interesting options.

The first, involved the infernal Autobot.

Megatron let out a low groan.

The footage itself was at least amusing. Though watching Starscream get his helm spit by a well-placed axe was an enjoyable pass time it only raised more questions *again*.

If Megatron could have shaken his head to clear it, he would have. Instead, he shuttered his optics and tensed and pistons he could still control.

The second sections of footage at least brought forth options instead of confusing him to no end. Seeing the familiar forms of Blitzwing and Lugnut came as a relief even if Blitzwing was dragging around a small yellow Autobot on his back. Lugnut on the other hand seemed to be investigating around a nearby water source. At least now Megatron had something to work with, even if it was only three other Decepticons on some planet filled with organics.

Megatron wouldn't consider himself 'lucky' in any form of the word at the moment but he would consider himself resourceful. It had taken several hours of using what he could to wire and rewire things around but eventually he had worked a basic short range communicator out of part of his

own communications array and odds and ends around the lab.

“Lugnut,” he began his transmission, “My most loyal follower...”

"This better be very important Prime. I told you I needed time and this specifically...."

Optimus stood in the doorway of their base. Arms crossed but visibly tense. His posture didn't change as the medic approached, "I wouldn't have comm-ed you if this wasn't very important."

"Well what is it then?" Ratchet grumbled, but moved to stand beside his commander.

Optimus simply pointed to the sky, "Blitzwing came early."

The triple changer looked odd flying in route mode and stood out like a sore thumb against the blue of earth's sky. Adept more for night flying Blitzwing looked out of place as the two Autobots watched closely. What caught their eye though was the yellow 'thing' dangling from the mech's back.

"Where... Where exactly did you send Bumblebee last night?" Optimus sighed, taking a few steps forward.

"Out on patrol...." The medic followed, keeping his optics on the oddity in the sky.

"Fucking... You know I shouldn't have to deal with this God damned bullshit until 2 months from now. But NO! Let's start this crap early this loop. The hell is Blitzwing doing here now anyways...?!"

"Language Prime!"

Optimus' pace increased before transforming and speeding down the road, Ratchet followed

closely behind.

"Prime! Don't tell me you plan on taking him on yourself?!"

Optimus' speed picked up as he darted around the other vehicles on the road, long lost were his street manners.

It was several minutes of driving into the city before Optimus stopped and transformed back into rote mode and scanned the buildings around him. Ratchet was not far behind.

"You're not going up there."

"I am not going to let Bumblebee get dragged around by Blitzwing any longer than he has to." Optimus fired his grapples and tested their strength.

"You ain't going up there alone." Optimus turned towards the medic only to watch as a familiar motor cycle and armored truck pulled up behind him.

Optimus rubbed his comm array before shuttering his optics. The familiar sound of transformation sequences filled his audials as he took a moment to think over the situation. He flared his EM field in annoyance at Ratchet for a moment before controlling himself. Opening his optics once again he looked over his team.

"You comm-ed them?"

Ratchet raised an optical ridge as if to ask, '*you expected me not to?*'

"Okay. Alright," Optimus took a long invent, "Prowl; you're with me. Bulkhead, Ratchet; get on that building," Optimus motioned to a building to the east, "Ratchet, I need your magnets ready if anything goes wrong."

Optimus looked over the now determined but slightly concerned team, "Alright. Roll out!"

Chapter End Notes

I always end up posting at like 3 or 4 am so editing is limited. I'm currently on the search for a second set of eyes.

Part of me super wants to rush ahead to the next part of this fic but i must restrain and continue the world building! AHHH

Next time;

Optimus has issues with Blitzwing.

Ratchet has some hard decisions to make as the team finally gets some down time.

Optimus begins considering going solo.

If no one will give Megatron help, he will simply help himself!

Take a Break

Chapter Summary

A fight scene

Bumblebee writes a formal report.

The dreams make Ratchet make a decision.

Chapter Notes

Not only is this chapter late, it's short too!

Sorry for this, I'm posting from my phone at 1 am, and my college is just finishing up mid terms.

It's short, unedited but important. Thank you so much for the support you guys.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Bulkhead curtly nodded and transformed and skidded towards the building. Ratchet, slightly more hesitant gave a small huff before doing the same.

Prowl looked towards his commanding officer before gazing upwards, "I doubt a cleaver placed axe will have the same effect here."

Optimus gritted his dental plates before wrapping an arm around the smaller bot, "Starscream in a predictable situation is one thing, Blitzwing with a hostage is another, completely different issue." His battle mask engaged as did Prowl's.

Blitzwing was unpredictable and deadly. He wasn't among Megatron's personal crew for no reason. Weighing his options from past encounters put forth a few logical options. But essentially keep Blitzwing on his at least sane personas.

Optimus' grapplers suddenly retracted and both bots were soaring towards the top of the building. Optimus landed gracefully on the roof and let the smaller bot down before returning his gaze upwards. Blitzwing had slowed his pace, his monocle focusing in on Optimus.

Blitzwing swung his feet forward on his descent slowly, his back plating flaring in support of the small bot on his back. The descent was carefully controlled in bias for the yellow bot clinging to the triple changer's frame.

Odd. Optimus made note.

Bumblebee landed softly on his feet and looked up to the purple Decepticon, "That was much better Blitzbrain!"

The icy face of Blitzwing rolled his one good optic, "Anyzing to get you to stop complaining."

Um. Okay.

Blitzwing finally turned his gaze to the ninja bot and prime Infront of him, "Optimus Prime I presume." Blitzwing's posture was as rigid as you would expect from the Deception elite. Optimus took note of the way he stood In front of Bumblebee.

"Luitenant Blitzwing," Optimus matched the triple changer's posture but focused his gaze on Bumblebee. In his peripheral vision the triple changer shifted. Alright, maybe using Blitzwing's rank wasn't the best idea. If Optimus had to be completely honest one of the hardest things was pretending not to know information he had come across before.

Maybe those Decepticon loops had rubbed off on him more than he thought. Well no time to dwell on it now.

Optimus motioned to Bumblebee, "Thank you for bringing him back for us. I'm assuming you'll want compensation for his return?"

Blitzwing looked taken aback as he reset his optics. Quickly regaining his composure he responded, "Ze Allspark."

Prowl moved one of his feet back in preparation to lurch himself forward.

"Excuse me?!" Bumblebee stamped behind the Deception, "I'm not some sort of bargaining chip to- to be passed around!"

Bumblebee attempted to move forward but was stopped by one of Blitzwing 's servos. Confused, Bumblebee was suddenly grabbed by the arm hard and picked up. In a fluid motion the Deception moved to the edge of the building and dangled the yellow bot over the edge of the building and lowered his cannons towards him.

"BLITZWING!!" The small bot clambered in an attempt to cling to the other bots arm as he dangled over the city.

Prowl and Optimus both took a hesitant but concerned step forward.

Click-whirr. And there was Blitzwing's angry persona yelling, "DELIVER THE ALL-SPARK OR ZE PUNY AUTOBOT GETS IT! JOU HAVE UNTIL TOMORROW MORNING!"

Optimus took a long invent and returned to a more relaxed posture. If he had to be honest Blitzwing wasn't his least favourite Decepticon but he was probably one of the hardest to deal with.

"Alright."

Prowl shot him a surprised look before readying his throwing stars.

Optimus kept his gaze on Blitzwing but addressed the bot beside him, "Prowl, I'll stay here with Blitzwing. Can you take Bulkhead and-"

'Um Boss?' came Bulkhead's voiceover his comm, and apparently Prowl's too by the way he jumped, 'we've got incoming!'

Optimus had only time to recognize the incoming object before it was upon them.

Blitzwing apparently hadn't noticed the projectile coming from behind him and when it landed it

startled the triple changer. Blitzwing whipping around to see the new arrival shot Bumblebee across the roof and towards the opposite edge.

Prowl lurched towards Bumblebee and grabbed his wrist before falling. Secured in the thought that Prowl had that situation under control Optimus turned his attention to Blitzwing and the newly arrived Lugnut.

Optimus readied and activated his axe as Blitzwing turned back to him, anger on full display.

"It is Lord Megatron! He has returned!" Lugnut boasted, seemingly oblivious to the situation at hand.

"Shut up you complete aft!" Blitzwing launched himself towards Prowl whom at this point had almost pulled Bumblebee back up onto the roof.

Optimus instantly responded, blocking Blitzwing momentarily. The triple changer moved to swat him away, but Optimus dropped down sliding himself between the Decepticon's legs. Wrapping the underside of his axe's blade around Blitzwing's leg and pulled. Hard.

Blitzwing landed face first onto the roof, bringing Lugnut out of his daze.

"Prowl, Bee, Let's go!" Optimus yelled, clambering over Blitzwing towards the other two Autobots.

Prowl elegantly slid himself down the side, allowing himself to be slowed and caught by Ratchet's magnets. Optimus grabbed Bumblebee who protested verbally before the larger of the two mech's lowered them both down using his grapplers.

"Split up, meet back at the base and don't come until you're sure you're alone." Optimus turned to move before looking back, "Bumblebee you're with me. "

And with that he took off.

Blitzwing and Lugnut gave chase for about an hour, and it took another another hour for Optimus to declare it safe to return back home.

Prowl, Bulkhead and Ratchet were there by the time they arrived. Bumblebee had luckily been quiet the entire drive.

This at least had given Optimus some time to think the situation over. In past loops Lugnut in Blitzwing weren't due to arrive until 2 months from now, not until after Halloween and his encounter with Blackracnia.

Given Optimus knew time line inconsistencies shouldn't be his main concern at the moment, he did a scolding to give after all, but they were concerning.

Something had changed and he hadn't caused it.

"Um... Optimus?" Bumblebee tentatively reached out behind him and Optimus turned to look at the small yellow bot.

Optimus paused as he entered the base before turning to Bumblebee. Bumblebee shrunk back as Optimus realized he was likely scowling in concentration. He made an effort to make a more neutral expression.

"Look Bumblebee, I can give you some long winded explanation on why exactly hitching a ride with a Decepticon was and always will be an idiotic move." Optimus began, shifting slightly on his feet.

Bumblebee shrunk further but said nothing.

Optimus cleared his Vocalizer but continued, "But I haven't slept- um gone into stasis for 50 or 60 hours now and I'm about to pass out. Plus, I'm sure dangling off a building is lesson enough in this situation. So," Optimus pulled a data pad out of his subspace and offered it to Bumblebee, "I'm assuming Sentinel had the mind to teach you how to write formal reports in the academy, your punishment can be a formal write up of the whole situation."

Bumblebee who suddenly forgot his shame, groaned but took the writing device anyways. He shuffled his feet towards the back of the factory and entered his own bedroom.

There was a moment of silence before the Prime noted a shuffling noise to his left.

"That was sorta tame don't you think?" Ratchet came out from behind a corner.

"If there's anything Bee hates, it's sitting still writing a multiple page report. Plus, I'd like to have the documentation to add to my logs." Optimus shrugged before stretching the pistons in his arms.

"So what now?" The old bot grumbled.

"I hit the hay and then pour myself into some data to try and figure this entire situation out." Optimus turned and began slinking back to his own room, "Plus, aren't you supposed to not be talking to me or something?"

Ratchet only grumbled as Optimus entered his room.

"What rank even am I?" Bumblebee grumbled, stylus down on the data pad Optimus had handed him.

"Uh, just put something like civilian I guess." Bulkhead commented, fiddling with a metal peice he had found strewn about the factory.

"This isn't fair. It's been so long since the academy and he expects me to remember proper formatting?" Bumblebeebe groaned but continued writing.

Sat in his chosen room Bee contemplated exactly what to write in his report. Omitting the more unflattering things (specifically about him purging his tanks on his first landing) was a given. But in all seriousness he wasn't sure exactly what he should include. Things had gotten kinda casual between him and Blitzbrain durring their short time together. Even if the 'con did dangle him off a skyscraper in the end, the triple changer hadn't been all bad.

Bulkhead shifted before reaching out and tapping the screen, "you have to state your intent of action before you jump to the outcome section."

Bumblebee groaned.

Professor Sumdac was an easy man to manipulate. Megatron chalked it up to the humans small,

organic, barely charged processor.

The organic would likely be the first thing he destroyed when he regained his former glory but he was useful for the moment.

Megatron wondered what the small man would think if he knew he was using the servo of a great war lord as a computer chair. Megatron attempted not to dwell on his dismemberment, there was a plan in place to remedy his situation anyways.

Simply telling the man he was an Autobot had gained him favour and traction with the man. Combine that with Lugnut's arrival and Megatron had a plan to get a functioning body within the next solar cycle or so. An earth year, was a long time to wait but he had confidence his generals could keep the cause in line long enough for him to make a return.

With Blitzwing and likely Starscream both in search of the All-spark at least Megatron could feel as if something was being done; even if progress was slow.

Ratchet couldn't recharge properly. Diagnostic scans brought up nothing, drinking warmed oil nor energon helped. And though he technically was still going into defrag during the night something was still off.

The odd memories of Nova would play over and over in his processor.

"Just Nova."

"You won't remember this in a few years anyways."

After a few weeks Ratchet couldn't handle it anymore.

It was time to make his decision.

"Stop moving."

Optimus groaned and splayed himself on the rec room floor, falling out of his cross-legged position, "This is impossible."

Prowl unshuttered his optics and looked towards Optimus beside him, "It's only been an hour."

A gruff vocalizer sounded behind them. Optimus and Prowl both turned to see Ratchet stood at the back of the room.

"Prime, a word," Ratchet shifted his gaze to Prowl for a moment, "alone."

Optimus nodded to Prowl, who in turn stood up and exited the room swiftly.

Optimus sat up and looked to the medic.

"Meditation?" Ratchet asked before moving further into the room and leaning on the wall nearest Optimus.

Optimus stood and stretched the pistons in his back, "After my... Outburst regarding Blitzwing's arrival I thought that getting back into meditation might help."

Ratchet nodded but looked away from his commanding officer, "I'm ready. To talk about all this."

"It's been a few weeks, why now?"

"I suppose the quiet is getting to my old processor." Ratchet looked back to Optimus, "I've had a lot of time to think. There are several flaws I can see but... Stop looking at me like that."

Optimus could feel the beam of excitement on his faceplates, "Sorry. Sorry. I'm just excited I suppose."

Ratchet rolled his optics, "so what exactly do you plan on doing."

"Get Omega back in the air, Blackmail Longarm Prime and get our team back to Cybertron... Er, home."

Ratchet ran his servo down his face, "I'm assumin' there's more to it than that?"

Optimus reached into his subspace and pulled out a data pad and handed it to Ratchet.

"Here are details on this for what I plan to do, take the day and look them over before you make a decision."

Ratchet looked down but nodded.

"But, we can start by getting some sort of contact established to Cybertron."

"You said you'd give me a day, my old processor needs time to think after all. Go check on Bumblebee and Sari, we shouldn't leave them alone together for long."

"Oh, well, Thank you Ratchet." Optimus turned to exit the room and offered one last small smile before exiting the room.

Optimus turned the corner only to bump into Prowl.

"Prime I-"

Optimus simply raised a hand, too busy thinking about what comes next to really think of the implications of the situation.

Prowl silenced himself, a little taken back but said nothing more as his commanding officer walked off.

Somewhere, within the deep reaches of Decepticon territory, hidden within a particularly sparsely guarded sector, a large warframe pulled away from his communications terminal. He stood, sighed and slowly paced towards the other end of the ship he currently occupied. The ship was small, only carrying two passengers and dimly lit as to not draw attention to itself.

The warframe entered the back room, crouching in the doorway before standing before his travelling companion.

His companion, a small civilian frame looked up from the console he occupied, optics expectant.

"I have done what I can." The warframe mumbled, before laying on their joined berth.

When the brightly coloured civilian frame curtly nodded and returned to his console, the larger mech frowned.

"Enough. Come to berth. You're going to over work yourself." The grey warframe offered, patting the spot beside him.

"It will be enough when I get this whole mess sorted out again. What did Cyclonus say anyways?" The civilian continued to type as he spoke.

"Cyclonus is pulling as much weight as he will not knowing my intentions. He is a good soldier, he will only do anything that he believes not harmful to his cause. He has had two mech's sent to earth now a uh... Blitzwing and Lugnut I believe." The warframe reached an arm out over the edge of the berth and pulled his companion away from the console and beside him.

"We have to stop this. This isn't the time to rest." The smaller mech protested, but made no real attempt to remove himself from the grasp of his companion.

"On the contrary, we must move again in a cycle. And you should be rested for the journey."

"Again?" The Civilian grumbled, turning to the warframe.

"The patrols are shifting again. And I'm sure neither of us want to be found this deep into Decepticon territory."

"If you insist." The smaller mech grumbled as his larger counterpart ran his digits over the large scar admonishing his chest plates

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much everyone for the support through all this. Your comments really help.

Im hoping to have time to write another chapter this weekend. The plot should pick up from here, as a lot of this chapter was me figuring out exactly how things would fit together.

Thank you again.

Next chapter;

Optimus Prime says something and it's probably both the best and worst thing he could do.

The Spider Likes to Gossip

Chapter Summary

Blackarania enjoys petty revenge almost as she likes to gossip.

Shockwave is logical even when being blackmailed.

Bumblebee is confused and upset but doesn't like to show it.

Chapter Notes

THIS IS LATE I'M SORRY BUT HERE IT IS

TIME TO SLEEP

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The night air was cold on Optimus' plating. Not as cold as it could be in Detroit, especially during the winter. But it wasn't winter yet, not for a few weeks on the human calendar.

A particularly cold breeze brushed over his plating as he monitored Bumblebee, Bulkhead and Sari wander the streets collecting candy for the odd holiday. Spiders, ghosts and other decorations occupied the streets.

God, spiders still gave him the creeps.

Optimus hummed to himself. The human tune felt odd vibrating in his speech mechanisms but the odd and imperfect notes had grown on him. He avoided doing so in front of others but aided in moments such as these it at least passed time.

Prime checked his internal clock once again. Only minutes... clicks now.

Optimus allowed his processor to wander to the past week; a blur of him and Ratchet down in Lake Erie attempting to rewire a basic long range communication console with Omega's Spare parts. Process was slow, but workable.

The work would be easier with parts from the Nemesis crash on the moon but they couldn't reach it. Which brought him back to why he was here now-

His internal clock pinged at him. He was early last time so if he waited another second...

Optimus immediately swung around and blocked the incoming kick with the flat of his axe. Blackarania bounced back and landed in a crouched fighting stance. She hissed, but made no further attempt to attack.

"Optimus Prime, how nice to see you." She spat, her words dripping with hatred.

Optimus put away his axe and relaxed his posture before speaking, "Elita, Blackracnia, whatever you want me to call you..."

The femme spat, "I haven't been called Elita in years. At least you remember an old friend."

"Of course I remember. You're here to take the All-spark and Sari's key. You were supposed to show up before Blitzwing and Lugnut but something, somewhere changed that. But most importantly, seeing me you'd rather take your revenge." Optimus shrugged.

Blackaracnia paused for a moment, surprise blatant in her multiple optics. "How did you...?" She drifted off slowly, still expectant of an answer.

Optimus looked back to Bumblebee, Sari and Bulkhead wandering the streets. They had moved down somewhat now. Optimus caught the urge to follow them.

"It's easier to say I'm experiencing a glitch that allows me to predict future events."

Blackaracnia paused for a moment but continued her venomous glare, "A glitch. You want to tell me what you did to Starscream was a glitch? You want to say you know all this because of a glitch?"

Optimus was unusually taken aback, "You've spoken to Starscream?"

She rolled her optics, "I'm the one he called to administer the field patch to his split helm."

Optimus chuckled, "They're going to continue treating you like a medic if you let them Blackaracnia. Dispute your talents really laying in science."

Blackaracnia paused again, finally relaxing her position, "A glitch..." She mumbled. The femme turned her helm toward Sari and the two mech accompanying the organic.

"Can the key purge my organic half?" She wondered out loud, momentarily lost in her thoughts.

"No," Optimus replied even though she hadn't been expecting one. Following her gaze he spoke again, "I don't think anything can truthfully. It's for the best though. You're better this way."

Blackaracnia immediately snapped her head towards Prime who smiled at her.

"You're stronger, independent. It suits you. You're not following anyone like a lost sparkling anymore." Optimus smiled, a soft and warm feeling came over his spark, "you're your own person now."

Blackaracnia looked away obviously embarrassed, "shut up. You aren't forgiven, if that's what you're after."

Optimus walked forward and placed an arm on her shoulder, "I understand. I'm still sorry though. "

Blackaracnia walked forward to the edge of the building where they stood. Optimus followed and looked over his teammates who were almost out of sight at this point. They stayed in silence for a while.

"A mech who can see the future... That's probably one of the weirdest glitches to come out of the Autobot ranks." Blackaracnia kept her gaze on the street below.

"It's a bit more complicated than that but essentially that's it. I mean Its not the oddest I've seen. I once knew a mech who broke the laws of physics running across an entire Galaxy."

Blackaracnia giggled lightly to herself, "jeez, you Autobots are just full of glitches huh?"

Silence fell again over the two.

"Blackaracnia. I need a favour."

"No." Came a definite and strick answer.

Optimus turned to her, "Elita, please-"

"We may be able to have a friendly conversation Prime but we're still on opposite sides of this war. Not to mention I still have no real desire to make up with you." Blackaracnia turned away. Her plating tight against her form.

"My team is stranded here Blackaracnia. I need parts from the Nemesis wreckage."

The femme walked to the edge of the opposite side of the roof and paused for a moment, "What about high command?"

Optimus forced himself to shrink in on himself, mimicking nervousness, "Our communication is down. Sentinel Prime has already announced us dead."

Blackaracnia snarled, "Sentinel... Leaving more mech's to rot...? That pit spawn, Alright. What parts do you need?"

Optimus smirked inwardly before listing off exactly what he needed.

"There is something up with Prime and Ratchet."

Bumblebee looked up to Prowl. The ninja bot looked concerned enough that Bumblebee and Bulkhead both put down their video game controllers. Bumblebee slowly moved a sleeping Sari of his leg before turning his attention to Prowl.

"What are you talking about Prowl?" Bulkhead asked, standing from his position on the floor. Bumblebee followed suit.

Prowl visibly hesitated for a moment, "They've been spending a lot of time away from base."

Bulkhead scratched his head, "They're working on the communications array on the Orion to call home, aren't they?"

Prowl nodded slowly. Bumblebee noticed another small moment of hesitation before the ninja bot reached into his subspace and pulled out a tiny mangle of wire and metal.

Bumblebee inspected the small wreckage. He tentatively touched the thing with a digit, half expecting it to disintegrate under his touch, but it stayed solid.

"Sumdac's drone." Prowl offered, "Mostly destroyed. But..." Prowl slowly and delicately moved some of the pieces of the tiny drone around, revealing some still intact components.

"I don't get what this has to do with Optimus and Ratchet. Maybe you've been meditating too long, it's gotten to your head." Bumblebee laughed, nudging Bulkhead's side.

Prowl shushed the yellow bot motioning over to the sleeping organic on the couch.

Bulkhead didn't respond though, instead looking over the drone in Prowl's servo. His stare was contemplative, as if dissecting the thing in his processor.

"The microphone is still intact." He finally offered quietly.

Bumblebee stood in shock for a moment before looking over the tiny drone once again.

"I overheard Optimus and Ratchet talking...I'm concerned." Prowl looked up to Bulkhead, "I think this thing may have picked up some of the audio."

"I can do better than that," Bulkhead suddenly swept the small object out of Prowl's hand and brought it to a table near the back of the room.

Bulkhead swung his free arm and cleared a brightly coloured sheet of metal of the surface of the table before putting the drone down gently. He then turned his attention around the room, searching for something.

"Bulkhead you're gonna break it!" Prowl followed him, reaching for the drone.

Bulkhead blocked him with his body. He shook his head, "I know what I'm doing Prowl."

The seriousness in his tone surprised both smaller bots into staying still as the large green mech sifted through a few boxes on a shelf.

Grabbing what seemed to be some small human tool, Bulkhead sat at the table and began fiddling.

Bumblebee shook his helm to clear his processor. He moved around Bulkhead to watch his work on the table.

"I didn't know you know electrical work Bulk." Bumblebee chimed, watching the larger mech carefully pull apart wires.

Bulkhead only grunted in response. A few minutes later he held up something tiny.

"What is it?" Prowl questioned.

"I think it's the short term data chip. But without a way to read it..." Bulkhead said, carefully placing it down on the table.

The chip looked oddly familiar to Bumblebee, "Wouldn't Sari know what to do with it? I mean it is her dad's drone."

All three mech's looked over to the sleeping organic.

"Hey Sari! We need your help!" Bumblebee yelled, rushing back to the couch. The distinct clang of a servo hitting a face sounded behind him.

The organic jerked awake and looked up to the yellow bot looking over her.

"Jeez did I fall asleep? What time is it?" Sari stretched, sitting up.

"Almost your curfew." Prowl crossed his arms, wandering over to the couch behind her.

"Hey Sari, we need your help," Bee said, whisking the organic over to the table where Bulkhead

still sat.

Sari took a moment and gazed over the data chip Bulkhead offered her.

"It's a micro SD card." She stated bluntly, whisking the tiny chip away from the mech's and pulling out an object Bumblebee recognized as her cellphone.

"What's on it?" She inquired.

"Prowl's gone crazy and thinks-"

"Audio files." Prowl interrupted Bee, "If you could retrieve them it would be much appreciated."

Sari was already removing a similar card from the phone. Bumblebee watched curiously as she slid the new one in, and a new set of files appeared on the small screen.

Sari clicked through the audio files. Most were silent, Bumblebee assumed this was Prowl meditating. It took several minutes of skimming through the sound files to find anything of use.

"You said you'd give me a day, my old processor needs time to think after all. Go-... Bumblebee and Sari-" Ratchet's patchy voice came out the small human device.

"There," Prowl interrupted. "Rewind it a bit, but that's around the right time."

Sari dragged her finger across the screen delicately before allowing it to play again.

"I suppose the quiet is getting to my old processor." Ratchet's voice came from the phone, "I've had a lot of time to think. There are several flaws I can see but... Stop looking at me like that."

Optimus' voice came next, *"Sorry. Sorry. -.... excited I suppose."*

The recording was of low quality, occasionally dipping out and becoming unrecoverable. The four of them stood around in a small circle, listening intently.

Ratchet began again, *"so what exactly do you plan on doing."*

"Get Omega back in the air, Blackmail Longarm Prime and get our team l-..."

There was an odd clang before Ratchet spoke, *"I'm assumin' there's more to it than that?"*

"Here are details on this for what I plan to do, take the-... before you make a decision" There was a pause in Optimus' voice, *"But, we can-... by getting some sort of contact established to Cybertron."*

"You said you'd give me a day, my old processor needs time to think after all. Go-... Bumblebee and Sari-" Ratchet's voice came one last time

The recording died down after that; any conversation effectively inaudible.

"Why would anyone blackmail Longarm Prime?" Bumblebee questioned, "It's Longarm Prime! Sure he could use a kick in the aft but he's not a bad bot! I mean there was that situation with wasp but I don't think Optimus knows about that."

"Who's Longarm?" Sari questioned. She removed the small data chip from her phone. Prowl took it from her and placed it back into his subspace.

"Head of intelligence. He was in the academy with Bumblebee and I. We didn't get along much." Bulkhead offered, awkwardly rubbing the back of his helm.

Bumblebee watched as Prowl stayed stiff and quiet.

Sari spoke again, "So what would Optimus want from him."

Bumblebee shrugged, "Probably to report the Deception activity here. But Blackmail..."

"We don't talk about this" Prowl suddenly interrupted, "Not to Prime and not to Ratchet."

"We can just go behind their back!" Bumblebee yelled back.

"Well whatever's happening Bumblebee, they're prepared to Blackmail the head of intelligence! We don't talk to them about this until we know exactly what's going on. And if Optimus won't do it, we call high command ourselves to make the report."

The room fell silent for a moment.

"Alright." Bulkhead grumbled, followed by Sari's nod of approval.

Bumblebee crossed his arms, "fine. But only because rubbing Decepticons in Sentinel's face would be worth it."

"That should do it." Ratchet grumbled, pulling himself out from underneath the control console of the Orion. Ratchet hesitated for a moment, before hefting himself back into a standing position. "Curse these old struts..."

"Are you sure?" Optimus asked, moving towards the console. When Ratchet nodded to him, he brushed his digits over the controls. He really should run a diagnostic on the communication functionality but his impatience got the best of him. Optimus moved a servo before once again stopping.

"Watcha waiting for? Give it a go." Ratchet ebbed. Optimus turned to him and watched as the medic wiped oil from his hands with a small cloth, "Shockwave isn't going to call himself."

The battle of nerves and anticipation continued in his spark. After a few moments anticipation won out and Prime accessed frequency he had seen Megatron use on several occasions. Though it was risky he was at least definitely getting a response. The line stayed silent for a few clicks. The quiet of the room threatened to overwhelm him when the line finally picked up.

Longarm Prime's faceplates illuminated the screen. The head of intelligence glared, face set in a scowl. He looked as if he was woken from recharge, or at least hadn't gotten any recently. Optimus made an effort to attempt to calculate the time on Cybertron but failed.

Longarm took a moment and seemingly recognized Optimus and Ratchet; his scowl deepened. "Though it's nice to see you're alive Optimus Prime, the reunion is somewhat dulled by the fact this is a private frequency. I would like to hope that this was some sort of mistake."

It wasn't. Though dangerous, using Shockwave's private line provided two main purposes; a

garanteed answer, and intimidation. Optimus realigned his spinal strut to a more formal and strict position, "Longarm Prime. It's good to see you too. It wasn't a mistake."

The implication hung heavy between the two mech's. Optimus made a show of leaning forward on the console in a fake display of confidence. He know Longarm's secret. Longarm knew he knew his secret. Optimus was in control.

Longarm's face shifted, components elongating and coming apart. Soon the face of Shockwave displayed on the monitor, optic cold. Like this Shockwave's emotions were unreadable.

Ratchet stepped forward beside Optimus and mumbled, "Senator Shockwave..."

Shockwave gave no indication if he heard the medic or not, instead looking directly at Optimus. "It would be illogical to continue using that wretched disguise if you already know my true identity. So tell me Autobot, what is it you want? Seeing as you didn't call high command."

"In a month I want to return back to Cybertron. Secretly. All you need to do is allow us back into the Space bridge Nexus."

Shockwave paused, likely converting the human time units into something he understood. His optic shuttered for a moment as if he was debating the situation to himself.

At last he spoke, "The trade is agreeable. My secret for your transportation back to Cybertron covertly."

"Agreed. I will contact you again before our departure to the closest space bridge. And it would be appreciated if we continue to stay deceased in the eyes of the Elite Guard."

"Affirmative." And with that, Shockwave cut the feed.

Ratchet turned to Optimus, concern clear in his optics, "That was very... to the point. It was too easy."

Optimus relaxed his spinal strut and sighed, "Shockwave will only betray us if it benefits him. My suspicion? Hes probably going to try to kill us when we arrive. Unluckily for him we have Omega Supreme if all else fails."

Ratchet blinked a few times, optics wide, "You've really thought this all through huh?"

Optimus chuckled in response, "I've had a lot of time and a lot of experience to figure all this out. Shockwave deal in logic. As long as things make sense logically, he's pretty easy to deal with."

"Watch out Prime, your inner Decepticon is showing." Ratchet smirked despite the implications of the joke.

Optimus playfully mused back, "You should see me argue with Starscream."

Despite the confidence in his vocalizer something felt wrong in the back of Optimus' processor as if he was missing something in the larger scope of things. He quieted that part of himself. One thing at a time.

Bumblebee had a stalker. Not a quiet, secretive stalker; a loud obnoxious *Decepticon* one. The sound of jet engines were never mistakable.

He would have reported the obnoxious triple changer, really he would have! But Bumblebee could handle the situation himself. He knew it was likely his pride overwriting his logic circuits but really nothing bad had happened yet, so the small autobot assumed he must have been doing something right. Blitzwing only ever followed him when the minibot was alone. It somewhat scared Bumblebee but again, the triple changer never approached and never got any closer than a hundred feet away.

Bumblebee had followed procedure the first few times and reported the Decepticon. Optimus sent Prowl to investigate both times but as soon as the ninjabot approached Blitzwing had disappeared. So, as long as the Decepticon stayed his general 100 feet behind, Bumblebee did his best to ignore him.

Even with the annoying Decepticon at his heels Bumblebee had begun to enjoy patrols, often volunteering himself to go on them. It allowed him to escape the fractured experience of the base. Optimus and Ratchet were on the Orion lately, leaving the three other mechs and Sari to themselves. Prowl had gotten himself all wound up about this Longarm Prime conspiracy too, which made being around the quiet ninjabot even more tense. Bulkhead and Sari were their same old selves but the base still felt empty and tense.

So patrols became his new pass time. Nothing but him and Decepticon engines.

Nearing the end of that night's patrol route (Now that Bumblebee thought about it, what was he even patrolling for? Blitzwing was right behind him) the yellow minibot paused. He wasn't quite ready to head back to base yet. The night air felt nice, even if the organic planet was slowly cooling down. And he wasn't ready for stasis so he took the long route home, along lake Erie.

Driving felt good now. At least driving made sense to him.

Something changed part way through his scenic drive. Bumblebee couldn't put his servo on it but something shifted. Bumblebee stopped and transformed, his silhouette cast against the lights on the lake. The roads were silent; no cars, barely any wind and no humans.

Silence.

Bumblebee swung around, gazing into the street and skies behind him.

Blitzwing was gone.

Bee's spark sank. Something about losing his recent companion bugged him; though he pushed the notion aside. He was a Decepticon, an enemy, not a friend.

Though Bumblebee had a hard time thinking about him that way.

Bee walked himself off the road and toward the lake shore. There was no real beach, but the grass would do. Bumblebee sat along the waters edge and brought his legs up to his chassis. He stayed there for a few clicks, watching the water thrum against the half frozen mud of the lake. The sound around him soon began to drone on, and before he knew it he had completely lost himself in thought.

"Jou know if you think that hard, your processor will fry."

Bumblebee jumped up and away from the Decepticon beside him. Blitzwing had sat himself to the right of Bee on the grass, completely unfazed by the autobot's startled reaction. In fact, the red smile of Blitzwing's unhinged persona laughed menacingly at him.

"Where did you come from?!" Bee screamed back at the war-frame, engaging his stingers in the process.

Click-Whir. Blue faceplates replaced the black ones, "Relax Bumblebot. I am not here to fight." The Decepticon even raised his arms in surrender.

Bumblebee hesitated, but lowered his stingers, "Don't scare me like that. What are you even doing here? Besides stalking me?" Despite engaging in conversation, Bumblebee kept his distance.

"Firstly, I did not scare you. A war could have happened right in front of you and you wouldn't have noticed. Secondly, I have questions."

Bee glared, "What kind of questions?"

"About your Prime. Zey say he can see the future."

Bumblebee's jaw hit the ground, "He what?! That's not true! Who said that?!"

"So it's news to you too zen? My apologies." The triple changer stood to go.

"Wait!"

Blitzwing halted.

"At least explain the stalking!"

"A fascination is all," and with that the triple changer took off, scorching the grass beneath him.

Bumblebee gaped as Blitzwing took off, *What the hell was wrong with that mech ?*

Chapter End Notes

thank you all for the comments and support. it means a lot to see the comments.
as a small life update, likely i wont post until the week of Christmas. I have a lot of projects due next week and not a lot of time. Thank you again for the support and patience.

Next time;

Bumblebee and Blitzwing form a tentative friendship

The begining of Everything falling apart.

This Will All Reset Anyways

Chapter Summary

failure.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"zhere is somezing in the atmosphere."

"I thought we agreed to not talk about work." Bumblebee sat up, looking to Blitzwing beside him. The warframe didn't move from his laid position.

"Zis isn't work. It's simply a statement. It hasn't moved, it seems to be vaiting." Blitzwing finally sat up, looking to Bumblebee, "I von't be able to see jou if it comes down."

"What? Why?" Bee yelled. Sure they had only been hanging out a week (ever since their last encounter) but still, the odd stop in their nightly meetings would be odd.

Click-whir. "Now where would the fun in that be, HAHA" black faceplates cackled at him.

"Come on Blitzy! That's no fair!" Bumblebee stood now, on the half frozen ground of the lakeshore, their new meeting spot. It was far enough from both bases to be a secret, but close enough to commute to.

"Jou vere the one who said not to talk about vork!! And vat host could I be if I bugged you with vork?!" Blitzwing cackled, finally sitting up.

"Host?! We're beside a lake! ...I will never understand you." Bumblebee smiled, sitting himself again beside the Deception, returning to their usual banter.

Megatron watched, and waited.

The cameras in the city provided him with a view of almost everything.

When Lugnut had told him of the space shuttle in the atmosphere the warlord was almost surprised.

Almost.

The gears in his processor were turning. Something seemed a little off.

A week passed, and Optimus was counting the days until their return to Cybertron. Lugnut and Blitzwing only made one more attempt at the All-spark but it failed as usual. Optimus and Ratchet

spent most of their time preparing Omega's systems with occasional help from the others.

Three weeks left. It would take a week to reach the closest space bridge so really only two weeks until they had to leave earth.

The feeling was foreign and new.

Ratchet handed him a data pad grumbling angrily, "three weeks! You gave us three weeks to get everything running! Even with everyone working on it..."

He took it silently, only half listening to the medic ramble on about things that needed to be done. Scanning over the list of functions still offline, Optimus sighed. A lot still had to be done yes, but it was doable.

When Ratchet finished rambling Prime spoke, "This wouldn't be an issue if you let us just use Sari's key."

"And I told you I wasn't bringing a live warship straight to Cybertron."

Optimus handed the data pad back to Ratchet and returned to his spot at the main console of the Orion.

"Okay, you're right but I still think we should make weapon systems-" Optimus was cut off by the soft pop of his comm array, indicating an attempt to message him. When Ratchet answered his own incoming message, so did Optimus.

"Um Optimus... Ratchet?" Bumblebee's tentative voice came through. The interference from Lake Erie was noticeable but not disruptive.

"What seems to be the issue Bumblebee?" Optimus leaned on the console, picking some metal chips from his joints.

"Look I know you're busy but we have A SLAGGING SHIP THAT JUST LANDED IN THE MIDDLE OF DETROIT!" Bee's panicked voice rang in his ear for a moment.

Optimus stood, mind reeling. No one was due to show up on earth. Not for half a human year. A sudden panic came over his spark.

"Okay, okay. Bumblebee, I need you to do me a favour. I need you to tell me the colours of the ship."

"THE COLOURS!? Oh yeah sure, let's talk about colour theory while we wait!!"

"Bumblebee! I'm serious!"

"... White and red. Why?"

"Ratchet and I will be there in 20 minutes. 20 clicks." And with that Optimus cut the line.

Optimus looked to Ratchet and started pacing.

"White and red..." Ratchet grumbled, "Not Decepticon."

Optimus stopped his pacing and took a long invent, trying to remember his meditations with Prowl.

"It's the Stealhaven." Optimus finally responded, "Ultra Magnus, Sentinel Prime and Jazz are on

board. Whatever Shockwave did... They're here for us."

This isn't right.

This isn't right.

This isn't right.

Optimus' processor was racing. He and Ratchet approached their team standing outside the Stealhaven. Bumblebee and Bulkhead figgitted and whispered to each other. Prowl stood rigid and silent in front of them.

"Prime! Ratchet!" Bulkhead yelled, relief evident in his voice.

The two approaching mech's transformed, joining them in looking up at the massive ship.

"Why did you approach it?!" Ratchet scolded, crossing his arms.

"It's been sitting here for 30 clicks! And the humans were freaking out...Ah!" Bumblebee yelled and jumped as a forcefield encompassed them and the ship; effectively separating the humans from them.

Sari came up and looked at them distressed from the other side.

"Ratchet," Optimus spoke softly, gaining the medic's attention, "whatever happens, get them out of here. I don't care how." Optics motioned to the three mech's beside them.

Ratchet frowned, but nodded.

Optimus stiffened, and engaged his battle mask as the bay doors of the ship came down, revealing Sentinel Prime and Jazz. Prime made note of the stasis cuffs hung on Sentinel's hip.

Sentinel Prime looked down at Optimus and grinned, "Nice to see ya old friend. Good to see you're doing well."

Optimus grimaced behind his mask, "Why are you here Sentinel?"

Sentinel continued his smirk as he walked down the bay ramp, towards Optimus. The unease the red and blue mech's spark rose with each step the other took.

"Well we were supposed to come here to investigate an All-spark signature. But that would have to wait for a few formalities. What didn't have to wait for a few formalities was an arrest."

Optimus saw the motion coming. He had pictured the motion of Sentinel's arms coming down on his, rendering him immobile. He had seen it back when he had spotted the cuffs on Sentinel's hip. He had seen it, pictured in his mind's eye as clear as day. He had fought off larger, tougher mechs over the loops; Sentinel wouldn't be the hardest fight he had ever gone through even if Jazz stepped in. If he could take on Megatron, Sentinel Prime wouldn't be an issue. Hell, he even wanted to take on his old 'friend'.

No. Sentinel wasn't the issue. His team was. Resisting arrest would put them in harm's way, and he really didn't want to do that to them. His resistance would put them all under suspicion and such it

was better to go down alone. But, they were so close to getting home; so close to the Iacon Hall of Records.

He should have seen Shockwave's betrayal coming from a mile away. The Deception wasn't passive and would do anything to prevent himself from being forced into a corner. He should have seen it coming.

To be arrested would mean the loss of the loop, the loss of progress. To resist and fight back would mean endangering the team.

The decision was easy. He had saw the motion coming but made no effort to stop it.

Optimus made no effort to resist Sentinel as he grabbed his' right arm and flung him to the ground, finally getting the stasis cuffs on him.

"Prime!" Ratchet yelled, reaching out.

Prime would have shock his head or done something but the stasis cuffs stopped any real movement.

"Ratchet. Don't." Optimus' tone was final.

"*Oh Ratchet don't!*" Sentinel mocked, "you're not off either medic. Both of you are under arrest under suspicion of Decepticon coercion."

Ratchet stomped forward, "With what evidence you crankshaft?!"

Sentinel's eye twitched but the smirk didn't leave his faceplates, "We have three separate reports with varying degrees of severity."

When Sentinel went for his second pair of stasis cuffs Optimus spoke again, "Don't you think that's a bit much Sentinel. Neither of us are resisting."

Sentinel put the cuffs on anyways.

"And who exactly made those reports?!" Ratchet yelled.

"We've got an anonymous report, one from Longarm Prime, and well... One from Prowl."

Optimus' attention immediately snapped to the ninja bot who stood beside Jazz now. Prowl caught his superior's optic and looked away ashamed.

Optimus' spark sank. Dread falling over him.

No.

Not Prowl.

Not like this.

Bumblebee only came back to his senses in the decontamination chamber as he, Bulkhead and Prowl were shot with soap and hot water.

No one spoke to each other.

Prowl had rejoined them after Sentinel and Jazz had hauled both Optimus and Ratchet off the a deeper section of the ship, likely to a holding cell.

Jazz had explained they had video evidence of Prime and some Decepticon named Shockwave making a deal. The talk had continued through decontamination, but Bumblebee paid little attention.

His mind floated back to Blitzwing. Was what he and Blitzwing considered treason? If the Elite Guard found out, would they send him to the stockades?

The pit in his stomach told him that yes, they would.

When decontamination finished, the three of them stepped out and into the main deck of the ship.

"We would like to thank you Prowl, for your immediate report..." Ultra Magnus dragged on but Bumblebee shut him out, continuing to worry himself.

Bee knew it was kinda selfish to worry about himself with Ratchet and Optimus the ones actually arrested. But he couldn't help it. Blitzwing and him hadn't DONE anything, they even refused to talk about any faction stuff. But if anyone found out...

A tap from Bulkhead brought him back, "Hey, they asked up to take Jazz and go get the All-spark. You coming?"

"Um yeah. Yeah I am." Bumblebee mumbled, following Bulkhead, Prowl and Jazz off the ship.

Optimus sat silently in his cell beside Ratchet's. His Processor running a mile a minute. The cuffs had been removed, but the cell still held him. His processor ran a mile a minute.

"Prime?" Ratchet's hoarse voice came from the cell beside his. "Tell me you've got a plan. Tell me you've been through this before. Or-"

"I don't. And I haven't," Optimus rubbed his now deactivated comm array in annoyance. "If I had known they would have arrested you too, I wouldn't have involved you. See this is why I didn't want anyone else to know. God fucking damn it!"

Optimus took a breath but still punched the wall to his left, "If it was me, I would just wait for the Loop to reset but I'm not about to put you through this."

"Good." Ratchet said, "Good. Because I'm not going down like this. Not after years of service. Also tell me what you know"

The door to the holding bay suddenly opened and Ratchet silenced himself. Sentinel came in first, swinging a pair of stasis cuffs in his servo, followed by Ultra Magnus.

Optimus admittedly hadn't seen much of the Magnus over the loops, likely due to limited access to

Cybertron. But now the supreme commander seemed like a whole new mech. The look in his optics was familiar though, similar to the look Optimus had first seen all those stellar cycles earlier. The exact same look he had given Optimus when he had thrown him out of the academy; pure disappointment. Optimus mentally winced.

"Optimus Prime." Ultra Magnus' voice was low as he approached. He said nothing more as Sentinel opened the cell and re-engaged the stasis cuffs. They were set to a lower intensity now, allowing for sluggish walking. Optimus was then pulled from his cell and moved to a small room. When Sentinel Prime put the stasis cuffs on him Optimus didn't fight. He immediately regretted his decision.

Ultra Magnus left, leaving Sentinel and Optimus alone.

It was the forced stasis and sheer willpower that stopped Optimus from kicking and spitting at Sentinel as he forced his hands into Optimus' subspace. Sentinel removed the datapads and personal trinkets with a devastatingly slow pace. Optimus hated the anxiety that rose in him as Sentinel's fingers touched the private contents of his subspace.

"Sentinel..." the word was strained, Optimus knew and he hoped Sentinel would blame it on the cuffs.

"You know Optimus, I pegged you for a coward, but not a traitor. But the jump from the two isn't that big I guess. Not from a wash out like you." Sentinel kept that god forsaken smirk on his face as he spoke. After a long second Sentinel pulled another datapad out, "What are you doing? Keeping a library in here?"

"I could empty it myself." Optimus winced out. He could, but somehow he doubted it would make the situation any better.

"That's against protocol." Sentinel mused, removing a small roll of paper schematics, "Organic materials? In your subspace? What has this backwash planet done to you."

Optimus stayed quiet.

"I mean, you couldn't even hold a team of repair bots together." The other Prime mused, accidentally dragging his servo over one of Optimus' scars. The motion almost seemed groping and deliberate.

The words and touch burned in his spark but he kept quiet.

When Sentinel finally finished he left, taking Optimus' things with him and leaving Optimus alone.

The close quarters were almost suffocating, more so than the cell. The dark walls seemed to suck the air out of the room. And now completely alone Optimus finally faced the full repercussions of his actions. Optimus's spark felt heavy in its casing.

His logs were gone.

His team was gone save for Ratchet.

His way home was gone.

In one large swoop everything in this loop had fallen apart in the worst possible way.

His logs were gone. His life-line, simply gone from him. Optimus at least got himself to set the goal of retrieving those before the loop reset. Everything else was less clear.

In hindsight Prowl's betrayal had seemed obvious. Prowl had been snooping around for a while now. He avoided Optimus, only interacting when completely necessary. Optimus should have seen it coming but he had been too wrapped up in completing his plans that he had missed key issues, especially when it came to his team. But hindsight was 20/20.

Shockwave's move seemed obvious too. If threatened to be exposed Shockwave was known to act violently. He supposed this was the easiest way for Shockwave to deal with him. Now arrested for Decepticon sympathizing no one would listen to him even if he did try to say anything.

But wait. Hadn't Sentinel said there had been three reports?

There had been only three bots that had known about the plan; Ratchet, Shockwave and apparently Prowl. The question of where the third report came from clouded his processor for a while as he ran through possible scenarios. The heaviness in his spark didn't let up.

Alright, that made three goals. Get Ratchet and him out of here, get his stuff back, and figure out who exactly the third report came from.

That at least would be a bit easier... right?

Chapter End Notes

IT'S EARLY YAY!!

OPTIMUS IS AN ANXIOUS BOY

Hey everyone! so this is a bit shorter than usual but that's because I had planned to make this part of one long chapter, that got so long, I'm splitting it up into two. The next chapter should be up some time next week!

Your comments really motivate me, thank you all so much!

Next Time;

failure. with maybe a bit of relief. we'll see.

Ousting Your Superiors

Chapter Summary

failure cont.

Chapter Notes

Optimus really really doesn't like not having control of the situation, and at the moments he's almost completely in panic mode. Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Bulk?”

“What is it Bumblebee?”

“Do you think we’re doing the right thing?” Bumblebee forced out. Kicking his feet against the Rocky shore of Lake Erie, been kept his gaze on the water where Prowl and Jazz had sank.

They sure were taking their time reaching the Orion.

“What do you mean?” Bulkhead questioned from beside Bumblebee. He took a rock and threw it into the water, watching it's satisfying splash.

“I know it's wrong to work with the ‘cons. But Bossbot must have had his reasons... right?” bumblebee questioned, more to himself than the bot beside him.

“I don’t know what you're trying to say little buddy.”

“I think Prowl was wrong. Not like he meant to be or whatever. We told him to go to Prime but he didn’t. And now look at this mess,” Bumblebee admitted, “and the Elite guard hasn’t mentioned anything about the ‘cons here on earth. It just stinks to me, like decontamination fluid.”

“What smells like decontamination fluid?” Jazz’s heavily accented voice came from behind them.

Bee whirled around to see the dripping wet forms of Jazz and Prowl, each holding one handle of the Allspark.

“Haha! Nothing! Just the um... the water? Man hydrogen and oxygen make an interesting pair!”
Bee stumbled out clumsily

“I kinda like the smell of the water,” Bulkhead offered.

“What?!” Be turned to the larger bot beside him, “It disgusting! You’ve got how many organics producing waste fluid in there!”

“...What?!?” Jazz yelled, suddenly painfully aware of what exactly the lake contained.

Prowl groaned, “Bumblebee please, I just convinced Jazz that the organic life here doesn’t spit slime.”

“But don’t they?” Bulkhead questioned, “we were watching that documentary thing and didn’t that one tiny organic do it?”

“That was a snake and that wasn’t slime. It was acid.” Prowl corrected.

“They spit ACID?!” Jazz’s vocalizer peaked but immediately cut off, his free servo up to his comm array in a flash.

There was silence for a few seconds.

Jazz’s visor dimmed when he spoke again, “We’ll be there immediately Sentinel Prime, sir.”

The concerned look from ever bot there must have prompted Jazz to speak again once his arm had lowered.

“There’s something wrong back at the Steelheaven.”

Get Ratchet out.

Get his datapads back.

Find that third report.

Optimus repeated it like a mantra in his head. The dark and quiet of the holding room proved to be a good place to meditate. Optimus was doing such as a commotion began outside his door. Checking his internal clock, he had registered several hours before any sign of another mech showed. It was definitely two mechs talking but the walls were too thick to make out exactly what, and with the stasis cuffs on this high there was no chance to move closer to the door to hear.

At last the door was opened, revealing Ultra Magnus and Sentinel Prime. Neither spoke. Ultra Magnus held a stoic expression and Sentinel simply glared.

“Leave us.” Ultra Magnus stated, a small tap of his hammer echoing in the small room.

Sentinel lingered for a moment but understood the absoluteness of the signal and left. The way he slammed the door on the way out wasn't lost on Optimus though.

Silence reigned for minutes. Ultra Magnus’ hulking frame comically big for the room. After the second minute Optimus counted Ultra Magnus leaned forward but hesitated as Optimus cringed. At last the Magnus finished his motion, disabling the stasis cuffs but leaving them on.

With the ability to move back Optimus rolled his shoulder plating, testing out and seized pistons or shock absorbers. Optimus then moved to his neck cabling, doing the same.

“Optimus Prime...” the Magnus began, catching Optimus’ attention. “I must ask, from a personal

interest, why?"

Optimus stared for a moment a bit taken back and shook his head.

"Even with the demotion you served for stellar cycles as a technician doing excellent work as an engineer" Ultra Magnus stated, "there was once a point-"

"When you thought I would make a good Magnus. I know." Optimus sighed. How many times had they had similar conversations? Almost every time he partook in a Decepticon loop he was sure. Without his logs he didn't know the exact number.

Ultra Magnus reset his vocalizer and looked towards the door for a brief moment. After another click of silence Ultra Magnus pulled up a chair to the table Optimus himself sat at, resting his hammer behind him, against the wall.

"I had a personal investment in you Optimus Prime. So you must understand my confusion." Ultra Magnus locked optics with Optimus and held his stare. A new, unfamiliar tired gloss filled the commander's optics.

"Where is Ratchet?" Optimus diverted. 'Focus on the goals' Optimus reminded himself.

"Back in the cells, quite adamant on staying quiet." Ultra Magnus huffed, "If you don't talk, Optimus you'll be sent to the stockades. And I don't want to do that; not to you."

Optimus tensed. Reminders of Wasp's multiple processor glitches from the stockades invaded Optimus' processor for a moment. Both his behavior and speech patterns were permanently altered.

Optimus focussed.

"There's nothing to say Magnus." Optimus finally resigned; effectively giving up on reaching Cybertron this loop.

Get Ratchet out.

Get his datapads back.

Find out who sent that report.

Probably not in that order.

“Optimus Prime...” Ultra Magnus sighed out. Disappointment obvious on his faceplates.

Optimus stayed silent in response. Trying not to eye the hammer behind his superior, a half baked plan forming in his processor.

“You've served with such loyalty over the last few solar cycles. I just don't understand,” Ultra Magnus stood.

Optimus braced himself. When had he wielded the hammer last? Sure he had taken down larger mechs then himself, namely Megatron and a handful of Decepticons. Yet still Optimus hesitated. This was still his superior officer after all.

Was he still?

Ultra Magnus turned and reached for his hammer.

No time to have an identity crisis Optimus supposed.

Optimus kicked one of his pedes up onto the chair underneath him onto the chair he sat on. Leveraging his weight on the chair Optimus launched himself over the table. Reaching his arms up, Optimus used his cuffs to wrap his arms around Ultra Magnus' neck cables. Before his superior officer could react Optimus braced his feet on the table behind him and pulled hard.

Both mechs fell to the floor with a loud *crash*, breaking through the table. In the tumble both mechs ended up side by side, Optimus' arms still around Ultra Magnus' neck. In the small room Optimus could recognize his advantage but had really only gotten this far through surprise alone.

Now out of his daze the Magnus rolled, bringing one large servo over, pinning Optimus to the floor in one motion. Now against the more sturdy brace of Ultra Magnus' neck, Optimus pulled once again. The pistons in his arms straightening for a moment before the cuffs gave. With a *crack* the cuffs split in two, weakened without their stasis function activated.

The servo on his chassis tightened as the Magnus got to his knees. Optimus responded accordingly, using his new found freedom to find a transformation seam on the Magnus' arm and push his much smaller fingers into it. The slick tubing felt gross under Optimus' blunt digits but in a nano click he found something that seemed sensitive and pulled. The tubing gave easily, and something warm splattered on Optimus as he pulled his arm back.

The larger bot yelled, pulling his arm off of Optimus as pink, half processed hydraulic liquid flowed out.

Not an energon line but it would do.

In the small space Ultra Magnus' movements were clumsy and a bit under coordinated. So as the larger bot reeled back he hit the wall, giving Optimus the moment he needed, finally launching himself across the room once again. This time though his servo landed on the Magnus Hammer.

Pulling himself up the pole of the artifact Optimus stabled himself. The familiar buzz of the hammer ran through his circuitry, as if greeting him like an old friend. Lifting it from its resting place, the familiarity of its weight allowed him to relax some, easing some of his anxiety. He may not have his datapads, nor his team, but he still had a way to defend himself.

Turning, Optimus found Ultra Magnus standing, jaw slightly agape, "You can..." the larger bot mumbled quietly.

Optimus allowed thunder to roll out of the hammer once in a brief response.

"This makes no sense..." the older bot grumbled, almost to himself. "Only I should..."

The opening of the door beside Optimus brought them both to their senses. Sentinel stood, shield and sword drawn in the door.

Perhaps due to the situation, perhaps due to the fight but the panic from Sentinel's searching found itself back into Optimus' spark, increasing Optimus' fight or flight response.

Without a lot of conscious thought Optimus leveraged both his weight and the weight of the hammer against Sentinel's shield, toppling him into the wall of the hall.

Optimus ran.

Get Ratchet out.

Get his datapads back.

Find out who sent that report.

Down the hall and into the holding cells, his vents running at the highest setting. Residual panic propelling him forward.

Bursting through the sliding door to the cells, he locked eyes with Ratchet, who gave him the most confused look. That look turned to horror as his optics turned to the hammer in the Prime's hands.

“When I asked if you had a plan I didn't mean this!! Can you even USE that thing?!” Ratchet yelled, hands cuffed and held against his chest.

Optimus nodded, his voice failing him and walked towards the cell. Tapping the hammer once against the floor and allowing electricity to crackle off it, the cell short circuited. The barrier holding Ratchet captive came undone. With a simple motion after that, Optimus removed the cuffs.

Ratchet looked down for a moment, pondered and then returned his gaze to the red and blue mech in front of him, “well slag it all to pit I suppose. What's next?”

“Datapads.” Optimus stated. His vocalizer wavered but he paid it no mind. He moved to go, but a servo stopped him.

“You're shaking. I can hear your plating damn it, what happened back there?” Ratchet's gaze was

serious.

Optimus wanted to say there wasn't time, that they needed to move but the wrong words came out, "I... never like this. I've never done it this way Ratchet. I don't know what's happening. Prowl..." his voice faded. Only now he realized exactly how panicked he was.

Ratchet's hand landed itself over Optimus' own on the Magnus Hammer. His tone was soft but solid, "Take an invent Prime. You're going to crash your systems."

Optimus opened his vents as far as he could and cycled all the air he could, taking a moment to try to calm himself. Unknowingly at some point he had curled in on the pole of the hammer, and now forced himself to relax enough to peel himself from it.

Then the door reopened behind him. In a moment of surprise, he reeled around. Standing up and ready Optimus could only imagine how he looked, half panicking with an ancient artifact at his side.

Sentinel stood in the door, with no sign of Ultra Magnus.

Anger became blatant on Sentinel's face as he charge forward, yelling. Optimus leaned forward and used the pole of the Magnus Hammer to block Sentinel's sword. Sentinel moved to swing his shield up and crash it against Optimus' side, but Optimus moved first. Crashing his helm against Sentinel's helm, sending both boys stumbling backwards holding their heads.

Incapacitated for the moment, Optimus ran his hand against a crack in his helm. Nonetheless he spat out, "Where are my datapads Sentinel?"

"That's Sentinel Prime to you!" the Blue prime spat back before charging again.

This time Optimus took the offensive. In Sentinel's rage he missed Optimus' motion backward. Optimus aimed, steadied his pedes, and in one swoop struck Sentinel in the side with the deactivated Magnus Hammer. Sentinel went flying into one of the containment cells, and in a flash of genius Ratchet went over and closed the thing.

The barrier shut before Sentinel could compose himself, effectively locking him inside.

The room fell silent for a moment save for the sound of roaring vent fans. At least until Sentinel began banging against the field feverishly, yelling obscenities.

“TRAITOR!” Sentinel's voice rang out.

Get Ratchet out.

Get his datapads back.

Find that third report.

“Datapads.” Was Optimus’ only comment, making his way to the door. Ratchet followed with little hesitation, though the small tremors in Optimus’ frame were still visible.

Opening the door revealed Ultra Magnus, stood, pink fluid still painting his left arm.

“Fucking...” Optimus grumbled, moving back into a fighting stance. He could feel his sloppy form, panic and exhaustion taking their toll.

“Language Prime,” came a small mumble behind him.

“Stand down Optimus... Optimus.” Ultra Magnus spoke softly. The lack of his rank hit Optimus hard but he tried to ignore it.

Ultra Magnus looked over Optimus to Sentinel in the containment cell and sighed with relief. Optimus’ stance didn't change.

“My datapads,” Optimus hissed, “where are they?”

The Magnus held an air of calm to him. And though his faceplates held concern, Optimus didn't miss his ready stance, “What has happened to you Optimus? You were never one to skip to violence, and now you fight like a trapped glitch-mouse. We can sort this out Optimus. You'll have a fair trial. Both of you.”

Optimus relented. Perhaps the exhaustion or perhaps the emotional strain. At last he answered, “What *hasn't* happened? If only you knew Ultra Magnus. Now *please*, where are my datapads?”

The Magnus offered the hand of his un injured arm. Behind him he heard Ratchet shift nervously. When the large bot in front of him didn't move for several nano clicks, Optimus offered the hammer back to Ultra Magnus and took his hand.

“I'm sorry Ultra Magnus.”

Optimus pulled the hammer back and used it's end to shut the door, temporarily trapping the Magnus' arm in the sliding door. Immediately Optimus moved back, grabbing Ratchet's discarded stasis cuffs from the floor. The Magnus had freed himself now, moving forward with now Sentinel's discarded sword in hand.

In the open space of the much larger holding bay Optimus knew he was unlikely to come out of this like he did before.

He really only had one option.

Activating the Magnus Hammer in his servo brought to life a thunderous clap, drowning out all other noise for the moment.

Ultra Magnus didn't hesitate like Sentinel would have, instead rushing Optimus. Using his larger frame to his advantage the larger bot attempted to over take Optimus but was suddenly stopped.

Not taking the chance, Optimus swung with a low charge on the hammer, using both hands and all the force he could muster. The Magnus didn't go flying as Sentinel Prime did but did fall to his side, revealing Ratchet behind him, his magnets being the reason the larger bot stopped.

Optimus on realized he paused when Ratchet yelled, “What are you waiting for?!”

Optimus moved then, dropping the hammer and placing the stasis cuffs onto his former commander's wrists. With a soft buzz they activated.

The large mech under him flared out a deliberate EM field. Aggression and rage prickled at Optimus plating causing him to pull back.

“I was right when I told you you were no hero,” the Magnus spat from at Optimus’ pedes.

The red and blue mech stayed silent, his only response was to turn and move towards the door. Ratchet hesitated this time but followed.

Optimus shut the door when he reached the hallway, ventilation uneven and erratic still.

Ratchet placed a tentative servo on Optimus’ shoulder and spoke softly, “Optimus, are you going to tell me what's going on?”

“T-the datapads-”

“Can wait five clicks. I’m following you to the pit and back. I want to know what's going on, and for frags sake, VENT.” Ratchet stated sternly.

Optimus didn't realize his fans stalled but he immediately reset them, finally addressing some of the other alerts on his internal display. It took a moment, but eventually he composed himself.

“You don’t deserve the stockades Ratchet. I’ve seen what it’s done to mechs,” flashes of experimentation on Blackachnia from past loops and Wasp's multiple processor glitches passed in Optimus’ processor, “You don't deserve that.”

Optimus realized he had himself braced on the pole of the ax and finally relented, allowing himself to drink to the floor, “I don't think I'm an Autobot anymore Ratchet. I don't think I have been for a long time, and I just didn’t realize it.”

Ratchet didn't move. Silence reigned for several nano clicks. But at last, Ratchet sunk beside the former Prime.

“Let's start with those Datapads and go from there. Jazz and the team will be back soon and we probably shouldn't be here when they show up, Sentinel's probably already comm-ed them.”

Ratchets voice was soft and calming.

After another moment, Optimus nodded and used the pole of the hammer to pull himself up and off the metal floor.

Chapter End Notes

Your comments really help me get motivated!

Thank you to everyone for your feed back!

For the record Prowl isn't going to be an antagonist in this fic. He's just confused and misguided at the moment

Next;

Failure Part 3

Oh, so It's Your Planet Now?

Chapter Summary

Failure part 3.

Arc 1 End.

Chapter Notes

So i finally decided to read MTMTE and i'm absolutely done. It's absolutely amazing. I really wanted to read the first few issues to get a base for a upcoming character and now I'm absolutely hooked. Please read it.

Also this chapter has lots of little sections, Just wrapping things up for the next major plot line.

Though... There is a bit of a start here.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Kneeling beside Sentinel's console Optimus put the last of his things back in their place in his subspace. The sound of Ratchet's fingers on the Magnus's console behind him kept a steady but quick pace.

The familiar feeling of the datapads in his subspace brought Optimus enough comfort to straighten himself out and regain his composure. Even returning the small music device to its place beneath his plating had helped him to relax. And though finding them beside Sentinel's control console was a bit jarring at least everything was back in it's place.

Once, when he was back in the academy Optimus would have loved to be on the Steelhaven. But now there was nowhere he wanted to avoid more. But, there was still one last thing he had to do.

“There’s nothing here,” Ratchet said behind him.

Optimus turned to Ratchet, “...What?”

Ratchet peered over the console at Optimus and shrugged, “Your arrest warrant is here, but no

details. Those three reports ain't here."

Optimus' face dropped, "You're kidding."

Ratchet moves from the console and towards Optimus, placing a hand on his shoulder he spoke, "Longarm- Shockwave is head of intelligence, he should have them. We'll just contact him."

"Shockwave's probably already changed his frequency-" Optimus started; suddenly cut off by the telltale rumble of the ships loading Bay opening.

Optimus stood finally, reminding himself to vent as he did, "I guess we're out of time anyways."

//

Bumblebee watched the bay ramp lower slowly. He lowered his battle mask then; a precaution Jazz had told them to follow only moments before. Though no one but Jazz raised their weapons as they slowly walked up the ramp.

And then the door at the back of the bay opened.

Optimus walked slowly forward, a slow almost uncertain pace. The paint was scuffed around his wrists, and there were a few signs of a battle littered his armor. If Bumblebee was right he could hear his massive cooling fans from here. His face though, remained completely stoic. But the most jarring aspect about him had to be the Magnus Hammer in his servo acting as a sort of unneeded cane. Ratchet came out from behind him, a more nervous expression on his face.

Jazz, Prowl, and Bulkhead immediately sunk into a defensive position. Bumblebee allowed himself a pause to think about how they made this all look so easy before following their example.

To a bot unfamiliar to Optimus it was likely they would miss the way his upper lip plate twitched but Bee had been with the mech for stellar cycles. And it helped that he knew that twitch. Optimus had several nervous tells, but the lip twitch was specifically applied when he had to make a hard decision. Often when Bee or Bulkhead messed something up and Optimus has to report it he saw that twitch.

“Optimus Prime!” Jazz yelled, weapons online and at the ready, “put the hammer down and come into custody quietly. Or I will be forced to use force!”

Bee watched as Optimus paused, his stoic expression unwavering. Then, he raised the hammer calling down a rumble of thunder, darkening the sky as clouds began to form above the ship. Optimus shifted the hammer in his servo and moved, holding with both servos now. Sharp flashes of light came from the weapon, small but noticeable. Optimus walked towards the four boots then, resuming his steady pace. Thunder accompanied his pede steps as he approached.

“B-bossbot?” came Bee's own wavering voice.

Bumblebee took a few steps back, prepared to dash. Bee had never seen the Magnus Hammer in action until now, but he understood why it was feared by even the top of the Decepticon army.

Jazz only moved one step back so Optimus came face to face with him before the others.

“Jazz Major,” Optimus said with formality, despite his current intimidating posture.

“Stand... Stand down Mech.” Jazz's voice sounded much less sure now.

“Take your commanding officers and get off my planet.” Optimus said not losing the formality in his tone. He leaned in, electricity almost jolting to Jazz's frame.

Jazz bolted then; past Optimus and ratchet up the ramp.

Prowl, who was directly behind Jazz took a step back again, holding the Allspark defensively.

Optimus sighed, lowering the hammer. A somewhat distant expression came over him before moving past the three remaining boots. Ratchet followed him down.

The three mechs watched the other two exit the ship onto the road. They turned to one another, emotions unreadable behind their masks.

Prowl was the first to move, headed up the ramp with the Allspark in his arms.

“Prowl wait.” Bee retracted his mask, and grabbed the other boots arm. Prowl turned back and threw Bee’s servo off.

“What is it now Bumblebee?” Prowl spat.

“We can’t just... just leave!” Bumblebee waved his arms.

“Optimus made it clear what side he was on Bumblebee. Now I’m picking mine.” Prowl said, turning back up the ramp.

Bumblebee hesitated. His processor running wild. Thoughts of his academy days, thoughts of watching delivery drones in the atmosphere, and thoughts of Sari kept him firmly in place.

Bumblebee looked back down to Optimus, who now walked away through a sea of watching humans, then back to Prowl’s ascending form.

For a moment Blitzwing’s goofy grin flashed before him.

Was he prepared to leave his only chance at a more exciting life than a spacebrige technician?

Was he prepared to leave Blitzwing waiting for him on the edge of the lake?

He made his decision.

Bumblebee turned away from Prowl and stepped down the ramp.

“What are you doing Bumblebee?” Bulkhead whisper-shouted.

When Bumblebee turned back he saw both Bulkhead and Prowl staring at him.

He took an invent before speaking, “Whatever happened with OP he’s still the same old Bossbot. And I’m not ready to leave earth yet.” and with that Bee continued onto the road below him.

To his surprise he heard another set of heavy pede steps behind him. When he turned again Bulkhead was behind him.

“We were friends back in training, we’re not gonna separate now little buddy.”

Bee turned to watch the bay doors close, Prowl glaring at them from inside the bay.

As the door closed, the field preventing the humans from approaching vanished.

Sari ran up and suprised bee, hugging his pede.

“So who were those guys anyways?” She asked.

//

“Are you sure they’ll leave?” Ratchet questioned, slouching onto the couch back at the factory.

“Not a clue,” Optimus replied, laying the hammer down against a wall, finally free of it's burden.

“What’s next then?” Ratchet asked looking towards the back of the factory, mind likely wandering back to a supply run he needed to make.

“What do you mean what’s next?” Optimus turned to the medic.

“Plan A failed so we move onto plan B,” Ratchet turned his focus back to Optimus.

“There is no ‘Plan B’. That's it. I wait for this whole thing to start over. Then I try this all over” Optimus allowed himself a moment of relaxation, sinking to the floor and propping himself up against the wall of the factory.

“Wait a click there!” Ratchet stood, “you ain’t putting me through all that and then givin’ up!”

“I just beat up Ultra Magnus and then stole the Autobots best weapon. What else is there to do? Keep earth safe. That's all I got.”

Ratchet surprised him by moving towards the door.

“Where are you going?”

“Back to that ship apparently! Seemingly I left with the wrong mech on that ship! Sentinel’s got more moxie than ya now!”

Optimus paused, and stood, “I just committed high treason! There is no Autobot alive that would-” Optimus’ optics widened.

“What is it?” Ratchet stopped in the doorway.

“There may be one more way to get back to Cybertron.” Optimus groaned, “but neither of us are going to like it.”

“What aren’t you gonna like?” Bumblebee cut in, entering the factory. Bulkhead and Sari followed closely behind him.

“Bumblebee? What are you-” Ratchet began suddenly cut off when Bee crossed his arms and tapped his pede.

“Oh nothing just committing treason like the rest of you,” Bee stated nonchalauntly before contorting his face into one of rage, “What in the PIT are you two doing?! Os someone going to finally explain this all to me or what?! You just broke out of the slagging Steelhaven and you're acting like me showing up is a big deal!”

There was a pause before before a soft chuckle resonated through the room. All attention turned to Optimus who laughed quietly to himself, "Alright Bumblebee. I guess there's no hiding it now."

Bee huffed but listened patiently as Optimus explained from the very beginning. Occasionally stopping the larger mech to ask about some random detail of a fight. Eventually Sari and Bulk chimed in too, asking more about what they could about past loops.

"So you're saying," Sari began, "that all of this is because you want to get to some dumb library?"

"Jeez. Just when I thought this was all getting really cool." Bee groaned from his place now sitting on the floor.

"I'm somewhat out of other options." Optimus shrugged.

"And why keep this from us Bossbot... I mean it's hard to believe but still." Bulkhead added.

"It's a little complicated," Optimus began. "It's not like I wanted to hide it but I didn't want to put you all in harm's way. Generally when I do something risky I leave you all here with Sari on Earth. It's much less dangerous for you all. Not to mention just how... odd it is Everytime you lose your memories and I have to start over."

The room fell silent.

"Wait! Can I touch the hammer?" Bee suddenly interjected, finally turning his attention to the artifact.

"Sure?"

Bee grabbed for the thing, letting out an undignified 'squee'. But underestimating its weight, it fell over carrying Bumblebee with it onto the concrete floor. The room laughed as Bee sputtered trying to regain himself.

“They’re leaving!” Sari jumped up from beside Bulkhead, holding out her phone. Sure enough footage of the spacecraft taking off played on the small device, likely a news channel.

“Good riddance. You think they'll be back?” grumbled Ratchet.

“As soon as they figure out how to take the Magnus Hammer from me, yes.” Optimus stood slowly, stretching out his components.

“So then lets get a start on that plan of yours.” Ratchet stood too, almost mimicking his superior.

“Well first I’m going to need Sari’s help. And then, we’re going to repair Megatron.”

//

“And that was my weekend! Kinda crazy, but cool!” Bumblebee chirped up at the larger mech sat to his left.

Part way through recounting his story Blitzwing had shifted from his insane persona to his logical one, looking out over the lake as he listened.

“Bumblebee you are aware that you just bragged about treason and gave vital information to an enemy correct? You just told a Decepticon that the Autobot lost one of their best weapons. Though we did lose the Allspark.” Blitzwing stated, tone icy.

“But that's the best part! I'm not really an Autobot anymore!” Bumblebee jumped up, smiling at the larger bot.

“And I take it then you told your Prime about our meetings?” Blitzwing stated, finally looking down to the smaller bot.

“Well... no,” Bee sat back down on the lake shore. “And he doesn't go by Prime anymore. He’s kinda strict about it.”

“Zen we may not be enemies by faction but we aren’t allies either.” Blitzwing sighed, looking back out to the lake.

Bumblebee deflated, pulling his knees to his chest, “We are still repairing Megatron though. You know, when Ratchet stops throwing a hissy fit.”

“Zat is the part I have the hardest time believing.”

The two of them fell silent. Only the sounds of soft waves and heating fans in the air.

“Zo... tell me about me Magnus Hammer. I’ve never seen it other zen battle.” Blitzwing turned back towards Bee and his face shifted to his cackling faceplates.

Bee’s face lit up as he recounted exactly how holding the hammer felt.

//

Prowl couldn't recharge.

Not in the way Sentinel couldn't; brooding over his console, glaring over some datapad. Not in the way Ultra Magnus and Jazz couldn't; looking over a large monitor and analyzing it's contents. No, Prowl wandered the ship.

And though it would take a human week to return back to Cybertron yet no one entered stasis. Not yet at least.

It took 48 hours for Prowl to finally be left alone to his own devices, wandering. Prowl contemplated if trudging along this path would leave a dent in the floor. Several times he passed the stasis pods but had no interest in them. Jazz had told him hours ago to relax, to meditate or something but he didn’t quite feel like it.

Not that he could focus enough to even compute what had happened now.

He rounded the corner into the lower deck for the... oh well apparently he had lost count. The deck was dark; Unoccupied.

Prowl lost himself again, his processor a swirl of anger and confusion. Nothing made sense anymore.

“He’s not in the holding cells.” a strange, low voice came from the other end of the lower deck.

It took Prowl longer than usual to spring into action, throwing himself between a few crates at the back of the deck, allowing his dark paint job to blend into the darkness around him. There was no way another bot would have been able to get on board. There had been no struggle, no noise. It was impossible.

“What do you mean ‘who’? Who else are we here to collect?” The mech continued. Prowl would have to only guess at the fact he was talking over his com system as no voice answered him.

“Nova, I swear to Primus and the Thirteen if this whole plan is a bust... We’re going straight back to Quintesson territory and staying there.” the bot snapped, irritation clear in his tone. The Mech continued forward, his pede steps heavy. If it wasn’t for the voice Prowl would have guessed it was Ultra Magnus.

“I still have to check the stasis pods. But it would be odd to find him there.”

The mech moved into the next hall and out of the lower deck, his conversation fading with him. Prowl stood there, and followed silently from a safe distance. In the dark of the ship Prowl could only make out occasional glints of metal and vaguely pointy shapes. But there was no mistaking it.

The mech was definitely Decepticon.

And now he was in the room with Ultra Magnus, Sentinel Prime, and Jazz.

Prowl acted, flinging himself into the doorway with his ninja stars raised. The Decepticon was curled beside Sentinel’s pod, looking him over. When Prowl made himself known the mech turned his head and stood. The bot was massive. Larger than Ultra Magnus definitely. His armor was dark grey, with lighter detailing. It was an absolute wonder how he had gotten on undetected.

“You’re not supposed to be here.” The mech said, rolling his massive shoulders. Prowl kept his stance, eyeing the odd symbol on his chest. Vaguely Decepticon yet not quite.

“Step away from the pods Decepticon!” Prowl grit his teeth and made himself look as intimidating as possible.

The giant mech froze, “Decepticon?” a smile came across, revealing sharpened dental plates, “I’m sorry but you have me confused with someone else.”

The Mech moved forward then, towards Prowl. Prowl froze in place, and was about to move into action but the mech in front of him stopped several feet away. The bot then kneeled in an attempt to bring his size closer to Prowl’s.

“Tiny Autobot, I am not here to do harm. I’m actually looking for someone.”

When Prowl didn't move, the giant warframe continued.

"Can you take me to the one called Optimus Prime?"

Chapter End Notes

And thus is the end of the first arc.

Now with all the pieces in place a much more expansive plot can form.
Thank you all for sticking with me through this first section and I'm super excited to finally get moving on the more main plot. And Finally some MegOp.

Special thanks to all of you who comment every chapter! It means a lot to me.

In the Next Arc;

Who was that mysterious warframe?

Optimus deals with his Identity issues.

Blitzwing realizes Autobots are emotional freaks.

A whole bunch of a new cast enter the scene; and some old faces reappear.

Thank you and please leave a comment!

Forced to Fight Your Own

Chapter Summary

Prowl meets our Mystery bots,

Optimus takes things to the bargaining table.

Blitzwing tries to help.

Chapter Notes

Thank you all for such a response last chapter!

As a treat here is the next chapter super early!

Also, I didn't want to do my final projects for school. Have fun!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

"Optimus Prime?" The Warframe repeated. "Red and Blue plating?" His accent was heavy and unfamiliar but understandable. His plating shifted and clamped down, attempting to make himself as small as possible Prowl would have guessed. But nothing would make a Decepticon looming over you and your planets leaders any less intimidating.

Closer now Prowl took note of the larger mech's optics. Yellow.

Prowl snapped himself back into reality and forced himself into action. Prowl assumed he had speed on his side just due to the size of the mech in front of him. He dashed to the left, into the door and threw his ninja stars as he did so.

Though with a soft 'tink' on the grey mech's armor they fell to the floor; completely ineffective. The warframe flared his plating out now, standing to his full size.

Prowl found his way to the back of the giant 'con' and went for a transformation seam. But as he reached forward the warframe whirled around with a speed Prowl definitely underestimated. The grey mech grabbed him by the small waist and lifted him off the ground.

“Now why the fuss? I’m simply looking for a prisoner of yours,” the grey mech almost coo-ed, keeping a soft tone as if Prowl was barely out of the Well of Sparks.

Prowl squirmed and pushed on the servo holding him pushing and attempting to reach any weapon on his frame.

“Enough of this foolishness. Tell me where the Prime is.” his tone now slipping into a more dangerous tone.

“Megazarak!” came a new voice from the doorway behind them both.

The larger mech; Magazarak turned towards the door, bringing Prowl into sight line of the origin of the the new voice.

In the low light Prowl could make out a box frame. The new mech stood stiff with fists clenched at his sides. The bot was significantly smaller than the grey mech, likely closer to Prowl's size than anyone else's. His plating was bright yellow with orange detailing, standing out where the larger mech would have blended in to the ship. The most notable though we're the large scars on his chest plates.

“I told you to wait on the ship Nova.” Came the larger mech's reply.

“And you told me that everyone would be in stasis for the trip.” Nova walked forward, poking the grey mech in the hip.

“They usually are.” Magazarak replied, tightening his grip as Prowl squirmed, “I think this one may be a stowaway.”

Prowl stayed quiet as the two bickered back and forth.

“It doesn’t matter. Optimus Prime isn’t here anyways. I swept the engine rooms on the way up.” The small bot sounded disappointed as he spoke. He moved from the door, turning the lights on before sitting on of of the stasis slabs in the room.

“What so you say we do then?” The larger mech almost growled. If Prowl had been any more vain he likely would have been offended by being forgotten by the grey mech.

Instead he was somewhat relieved.

Nova shrugged his shoulders and pondered for a moment, “Check the ship’s navigation. If we can see that last planet they we're on we might be able to figure out where he is.”

Megazarak grunted in return, seemingly satisfied with the smaller bot’s plan.

Now with that seemingly sorted out, both mechs turned their attention to Prowl, who still pulled at the servo trapping him.

“Megazarak no.” Nova slid of the slab and stood.

“You always assume the worst.” Magazarak smirked down at the smaller mech.

The smaller mech gave a small puff from his vents and moved towards Magazarak, “Because I'm right. Put him in stasis With the others.”

“He’s seen us now. We can’t continue to be anonymous if we let him live. And neither of us are mneurosurgeons.”

“Are we going to have this argument again? Really?” Nova crossed his arms and tapped his foot.

Megazarak was quiet for a moment, thinking it over.

“I suppose not.” Magazarak groaned out. Turning with Prowl still in his servo the large grey mech made his way to one of the stasis slabs. Prowl struggled still as the larger bot forced him down.

Nova joined in then, attaching the necessary wiring. Once set, Nova moved towards the lock button and-

“Stop!” Prowl surprised himself but yelling out, unsure as to exactly why.

Nova jumped in response, seemingly surprised by the intrusive voice. Megazarak didn't react at first.

“So it does speak...” The large mech glared, “Doesn’t matter.” Megazarak reached then for the button himself.

“What is it you want with Optimus!?” Prowl tried yelling out once more.

It was Nova this time who spoke, “That depends on if he’s co-operative or not.”

And then the world went dark.

Optimus could tell Ratchet was brooding over this. And Ratchet didn't brood silently.

“The slag-maker! Decepticon leader!” the medic yelled, pacing the hallway of Sumdac tower.

“Come on Ratchet! We’ve been over this several times, or are you so old you forget things after we say them?” Bumblebee joked. Sari laughed from beside him.

“I may have one servo in the scrap-heap but my processor Is fine! I can't say the same for anyone else here!” Ratchet seathed, continuing to pace.

Optimus had tried earlier to convince them he would do this alone. He had made a convincing argument in his opinion; he had in fact repaired Megatron before and he had defeated him on a couple occasions. It would have at least been quieter.

Ratchet had insisted on coming along. Not quietly either. Even though for the last few days he had been verbally against the plan not even he could argue it was the only way to get back home.

Bumblebee had heard about it and simply wanted to see. And if Bee came, which was impossible to stop, Bulkhead followed.

Sari and Professor Sumdac were simply involved and so it couldn't be helped.

Sumdac had almost fainted when Optimus had explained who Megatron was, then apologised profusely about trying to repair a War Lord. Then when Optimus himself explained that they were going to repair him themselves the professor did faint.

Now an hour later all six of them stood outside of Sumdac's lab. Undoubtedly Megatron could hear them, if not through the walls than definitely through the security system.

They hadn't brought the Magnus Hammer. Bringing it would have made them seem hostile and this was a meeting, not a fight. And if Optimus could he would rather keep it a secret.

Megatron was just going to have to get used to it.

"Optimus!" Ratchet's voice was low; an almost growl, "let's get this over with."

Optimus walked away from the wall he was leaning on as Sumdac opened the door. One last time he went through the plan in his head.

Repair Megatron.

Build a spacebridge for him.

Hitch a ride to Cybertron on the Decepticon invasion.

Warn someone on Cybertron before hand.

Turn on Megatron.

While the Decepticons are running around confused while Strika and Starscream fight for leadership, head to Iacon.

Head to the hall of records while everyone is distracted.

Let the Autobots handle to the Decepticons .

Ratchet hadn't liked it. But also couldn't provide his own solution. Bumblebee was just happy to see action. Bulkhead was reluctant to provide his skills as an engineer but eventually agreed. Sari, of course, would be left on earth.

The plan required one simple detail that couldn't be ignored.

“We can’t talk about the plan once we put it in motion. No questions. No secret meetings.” Optimus had provided earlier in the factory.

“Why not?” Bumblebee crossed his arms, visibly annoyed, “that’s like half the fun of a secret mission!”

“Once we’re among the Decepticons our every move will be watched. I’ve had to deal with Starscream or Megatron finding out a few too many times.” instinctively Optimus’ hands went to one of the scars on his side.

Though bumblebee didn't seem to notice as he continued complaining, Ratchet did.

“Enough Bumblebee. Optimus is right.” The medic growled.

Sumdac hesitated at the door, but with one last glance looked to Optimus for reassurance. Optimus nodded and Sumdac opened the door.

“Scrap he looks awful!” Bumblebee just about yelled when he saw the state Megatron was in, dismembered head and all.

“I warned you,” was all Optimus said before moving forward into the lab.

“How lovely it is to be graced with your presence *Prime*. ” Megatron's smooth voice came out of seemingly everywhere.

They filed into the room minus Bulkhead, who seemingly didn't like the idea of being in a room mostly composed of a war lord's internal components.

“This would be kinda cool. Ya know if he wasn't a sentient talking robot.” chimed in Sari, who stood beside her father as he moved to a console on the opposite side of the room.

“What is your business here Autobot? Come to finish the job?” Megatron seemingly only addressed Optimus’ when he spoke.

“The opposite actually.” Optimus replied, fiddling with the severed hand Sumdac had been using as a chair.

“We’re here to patch you up big guy!” Bumblebee said, walking over and patting Megatron's head.

“Bumblebee!” Optimus spat, “Have some respect!”

The room went quiet for a moment as everyone stared at their leader.

“Sorry,” Optimus said, trying to relax and fall back into a calm persona, “Old habits.”

“What a team you have here Prime. A bot too scared to come in, a grouchy medic, a bot with no experience and organics. What could you possibly be here for?” Optimus could almost hear Megatron's smirk in his voice.

Optimus rolled his shoulders and walked forward. Taking a deep breath he sat down right in front of Megatron's head.

He could almost feel everyone's eyes on him.

“Megatron. I'm sure you're confused. But let me begin at the beginning. My name is Optimus. My team and I have been stranded here on Earth by the Autobots. Due to recent events we have recently defected. I'm unsure as to how much you've heard-”

“Lugnut tells me you can see the future.” Megatron interrupted.

“Ha!” Bumblebee laughed, “Why do all the con's think that?”

Optimus rubbed his comm array in frustration, “In a sense. It's the easiest way to explain things.”

“Prove it,” Megatron said, sounding almost uninterested in the actual outcome.

“I mean what do you want me to tell you about? Shockwave on Cybertron? Your plans to take over Cybertron? It was quite smart actually spreading your army around the fringes like that,” Optimus sighed, leaning back, “Or should we talk about your internal command structure. Having Strika run things in your absence was smart but did you really think Starscream would stay quiet?”

Megatron's cabling twitched.

“I could go on. But in reality I think you need us Megatron. You need us to reconstruct your body. You need us to build you a space bridge. And you need us because I can stand against Ultra Magnus on my own. Ask Starscream about his helm if you don't believe me? It doesn't matter if I can tell you the future, It just matters you have no other choice.”

The room stayed silent for a beat again.

“If you expect me to *grovel*... ”

“I'm *asking* you to make a deal with me Megatron.”

“And what are you asking for *Prime*? ” Megatron growled, acid setting in his voice.

“Firstly, I said we defected. Autobot and Prime aren’t going to work-”

“I will call you what I please.”

“Just stop calling him Prime and let's move on for pit’s sake.” Ratchet chimed in.

“And what we want in return is a ride back home.” Optimus relented.

“A ride on a warship? An Autobot drop out?” Megatron jested, “This is all too ridiculous!”

“You have no clue Megatron.”

For the third time the room fell into a awkward silence. After a few minutes Optimus sighed.

This wasn't the past way he had approached Megatron. No, usually he came from a place of weakness.

Optimus moved to stand, another failure under his belt.

“Fine.” Megatron finally spoke up.

“What?”

“I said I agree to your terms. We can figure out the details when I have a body. Since you seem to be so keen on making demands.”

Optimus relaxed, “Sari, if you would do the honours.”

The small organic smiled and hopped over to Megatron, holding up her key.

“Why must you torture me further Prime? Letting the organic do it?” Megatron groaned.

“Hey!” Sari yelled, holding her key up to his head. The small compartment on the side of it opened, revealing the keyhole she was looking for, “I take offense to that!”

“You should.”

As Sari put her key in the hole the room filled light. The light only lasted a moment as expected before Megatron's large form stood in front of them.

Optimus regretted not bringing the Magnus Hammer.

Megatron stretched, likely deliberately showing off his size. Optimus held his ground directly in front of him, coming off weak now could lead to unpleasant consequences.

“Alright Prime. You have my attention. Though I would request we take this somewhere where I haven't just been staring at my own dismembered body for a few months.” Megatron moved towards the door, pushing past Optimus in the process.

“The Decepticon base it is then.” Optimus stated, following suit.

Megatron looked over his shoulder and made an almost disgusted face, “How do you know where...?”

Optimus smirked, the familiar feeling of control settling in his spark, “I can tell the future remember?”

Optimus walked past Megatron and made his way down the hall.

Ratchet followed, stopping briefly beside Megatron to laugh smugly beside him, “Get used to it. He confuses everyone.”

Bumblebee didn't like the cave the Decepticon base was set in. Not only was it damp, dingy and full of Decepticons but the whole thing felt distinctly like a trap.

How Megatron orchestrated it Bee had yet to figure out, but every part of him was screaming '*get out get out get out*'.

Optimus seemed calm enough though, which was likely the only reason the team (minus the professor now) was still following him.

They eventually made it to the main cavern. Lugnut, Blitzwing, Starscream, and Blackarachnia stood there, some sort of metal sheet between them mocking a table.

Obviously Megatron had called ahead, having a fake meeting room set up.

"OH GLORIOUS LEADER WE HOP THESE PREPARATIONS ARE TO YOUR LIKING!" Lugnut's unmistakable voice echoed through the chamber.

"For us? Awe! You shouldn't have!" Bee couldn't help himself saying, nerves aiding in the slip of the tongue.

"Not now Bumblebee." Ratchet chastised him.

Bee assumed Optimus had done this before by the way he sat gracefully in the spot Megatron offered him.

The rest of them filed in and sat in a seat around the table. Megatron and Optimus sat opposite of each other. Bumblebee let his nerves get the best of him again; sitting beside Optimus with Bulkhead in beside him.

This couldn't be happening. They were sitting at a table discussing a work contract. This was completely ridiculous. Completely and utterly ridiculous.

Talks had started by now. Optimus started with his own demands but bumblebee swiftly tuned the entire situation out.

Bee thought about Prowl, how likely he would have tried to put a stop to all this. Or Maybe he would be right beside Optimus prime debating away at working conditions. Who knew.

But in the midst of examining the walls around him a jolt of movement caught his eye. While the others were entirely focused on the two mech's at the table Bumblebee looked towards Blitzwing.

Blitzwing, who in his angry persona (Bee gave a passing thought to nicknaming them all) tapped directly on his Decepticon insignia.

This confused Bumblebee who looked down at his own Autobot badge, not understanding the gesture.

Bee looked back up to now the random personality, who made a wiping gesture over his insignia. It took a few more dramatic wipes for Bumblebee to get it.

“Oh! What about our insignias!” Bee interjected, interrupting Prime in the middle of his sentence. When all eyes fell on him he continued, “oh um... eh... like... We should remove them?”

Blitzwing nodded then motioned again to his Decepticon symbol and put an ex through it.

“But... but I'm I want it written in that we don't have to take the Decepticon brand?”

Blitzwing gave him the thumbs up, silently laughing to himself.

Optimus looked over the datapad he and Megatron had been passing back and forth with notes on it. Eventually he typed something in.

“Thank you bumblebee. That's actually a good point.”

“This is the equivalent of contract work,” Starscream grumbled from beside Megatron, “Why

would we ever need you to take the oath, not that you're deserving of it ground frames."

"Though I detest your... need for formality on this seemingly simple work arrangement, if we are to include that, I would require that specific provision not be extended to Prime himself." Megatron reached for the datapad, looking it over once again.

"For the last time my name is *Optimus*. And that's fine." Optimus nodded, crossing his arms.

"No that ain't fine!" Ratchet growled, "You're not takin' their brand."

"It's not a big deal Ratchet," Optimus said smoothly, "it's just a brand to the spark casing. And besides, the provision states that I may be asked to take their brand, not that I have to just yet."

"But why, my liege!" Starscream rambled.

"That is none of your concern Starscream." Megatron snapped, tossing the datapad bad to Optimus.

"It's because he's threatening to keep me in line," Optimus explained, "he wants to be able to send the Decepticon Justice Division after me should anything go wrong. It's simply a trust provision."

"Will that be all then, Prime?" Megatron rolled his optics and stood.

"I believe that's it, yes. Construction will begin tomorrow."

"And Prime? May I have a word with you, alone?"

Everyone filed out. His team to the exit, and the Decpticons made their way into the deeper tunnels.

Ratchet had objected at first but eventually even he left the room.

“What do you need to see me in private for?” Optimus couldn't keep the unease from his voice despite his best attempts.

“Tell me Prime, what condition did you leave Ultra Magnus in when you stole his hammer?”

Oh. That.

It did occur to Optimus that Megatron may have seen a news feed with him walking off the Steelhaven with it.

“He’s fine. Broken hydraulic line is all.” Optimus tucked the datapad away in his subspace.

“Pity.” Megatron walked around the table slowly, making his way towards Optimus, “and tell me, where is the hammer now? Since you don’t seem to be toting it around yourself.”

Optimus cringed, “Hidden, away from here. It’s not needed.”

Megatron was beside him now, leaning over the table, “know this *Prime*, the promise of that hammer on *my* front lines is the *only* reason I have put up with you stupid formalities. And Yes, though I want you to take brand for disciplinary reasons my main concern is having you and that artifact destroying the rest of you Autobots.”

Optimus stayed silent, frozen in place, “I like you *Prime*. You’re bold. I'll play your game for now, but don't get me wrong. You will take the oath before we invade Cybertron”

Megatron stood, backing off from the table, “I will see you again tomorrow. Don’t be late.”

Chapter End Notes

WHOOT!!

So there's this weird spacing thing that happens when i move the fic from google docs to the website and i'm too lazy to fix it, so you're gonna have to bear with me.

Next time;

Construction on the Space Bridge begins!

Prowl finds a new career.

Nova Can't drive. So don't let him.

The Crew of the Tyrant Usurper

Chapter Summary

Bumblebee does his job for like 5 seconds before getting a new one.

Megatron makes things annoying for everyone involved.

Prowl is just sad.

Nova is cute

Chapter Notes

u·surp·er

/yoʊˈoʊsərpər/

noun

a person who takes a position of power or importance illegally or by force.

AKA. the author wanted a reason to force one of the ships to spend a significant amount of time together. By force.

Also hooray for a long chapter!

Also not a lot of Optimus this chapter. weird.

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Bumblebee liked his part of the plan. Though ‘courier’ hadn't sounded exciting in the beginning it was proving to be better than Bee had expected. When Optimus had explained that he was going to be running back and forth between the Decepticon base, The Orion and Sumdac tower Bee had been sceptical. But now, with his first important package safely tucked in a compartment in his leg Bee felt a rush wash over him. He had no idea what the package contained but it was small and cylinder shaped, which made sense since it was intended for Sumdac himself.

It was the end of their first week of work, twelve hours a day (with breaks), seven days a week and Bee had made the excuse he wanted to go see Sari. Optimus had seen him off, outside the Decepticon base when he had handed him the small package. It was exciting.

Bee wanted to know what the package was; Desperately so but refrained from stopping to check. After all, Optimus had insisted that the entire plan relied on misinformation. Optimus had explained that if anything were to happen and the Decepticons asked questions none of them would truly have the full story. The concept somewhat confused Bumblebee but it seemed like a good idea so he would go along with it.

Eventually he arrived at Sumdac tower. Sari greeted him at the door, running up hugging his pede.

“It’s like I haven’t seen you in forever!” Sari exclaimed, “Are the Decepticons staying in line? How’s the space bridge thingy?”

Bumblebee chuckled, “It’s been a week Sari, it hasn’t been that long. The space bridge is fine, construction is on schedule.” Bumblebee looked around, passing glances around his surroundings. Suddenly he felt a bit paranoid.

“Can we go inside?” Bumblebee mumbled.

“Sure!” Sari grinned, making her way inside the lab. Both of them made their way inside as Sari continued, “so are we gonna go for a drive, play some video games?”

Bumblebee smiled, “Anything you want, right after I make a delivery.” Bumblebee reached down and pulled out the cylindrical package, “Where’s your dad?”

Megatron didn’t get this far by underestimating those serving under him or those against him. The issue on the table was that the new red and blue mech didn’t fit into either of those categories. If Megatron could give his best guess the small Prime was using him for his own personal goals, which could be dangerous in its own right.

And Megatron could only guess exactly what that goal was. Making contact with Shockwave had shone some light on the situation. Not only had Shockwave provided some helpful personal information on the mech but also had explained what exactly had lead to this situation. The courageous, or possibly foolish Prime had actually *blackmailed* Shockwave which was a surprise in and of itself. Shockwave has suggested they kill the now ex-Prime, but Megatron refused. Not only was there still a space bridge to build but Megatron felt it was better to get the full story before making his own move.

Still Megatron couldn’t help but feel like he was stuck in a dark room, desperately trying to the larger picture but only able to understand what his hands could feel.

It didn’t help either that most of his own crew had suddenly become superstitious of the red and blue mech. Even Lugnut, who was tasked with watching over the repair crew as they worked, would make passing comments about how the ‘accursed autobot’ knew things he shouldn’t. The worst was Starscream though, whom eventually had to be banned from the work site after demanding to fight the ex-Prime, yelling something about a rematch; this time without ‘the creepy mind games’.

At least Blackarania had warmed up to the crew, occasionally bringing back some sort of gossip. Nothing of much use, but at least it was the beginning of trust Megatron could exploit if needed.

Megatron had avoided the work site himself. If possible he would prefer his presence stay a rare event. Having the repair crew become to accustomed to him would remove the amount of intimidation he held over them.

Well all of them except the infernal Prime.

The Prime avoided him, not an issue there but when forced to face the Warlord the repair

technician held himself with a distinguished strength. It was a familiar pose, Starscream held it often; Strong, determined and unwavering.

It made annoyance slowly bubble within the warlord.

And the infernal look the Prime held most of the time. That horrid look. The red and blue mech constantly looked as if he wasn't in the room, recessed into the deepest pits of his own mind.

But Megatron wasn't one to underestimate mechs.

Megatron often used the same facade. It made the mechs around one relax and possibly let something slip. Somewhere in his processor Megatron could tell the ex-Prime was doing the same thing.

Megatron strode down the caverns towards the work site. The whole reason Megatron even allowed his processor to wander to the small leader was a matter of practicality.

The Prime had requested he come look at an issue they had encountered during construction.

The mouth of the tunnel opened suddenly revealing the large cavern the repair crew has set up in. The ceiling had been broken open to accommodate the height of the planned structure, allowing for an abundance of natural light.

Lugnut straightened his posture at Megatron's arrival and began to speak, "The foolish Autobots continue to insist on an audience with you master!"

The large green one turned from his console and the medic and small yellow one stopped moving sheets of metal to look at the new arrival to the room.

The Prime stood at the partially constructed base of the bridge, as if expecting the warlord to enter the cavern at that exact moment.

"That is why I am here Lugnut. To clear up this 'issue' the Prime mentioned." Megatron made his way toward the Prime further into the cavern.

The bright blue and red of the mech's paint were dulled under the dust kicked up in the cavern. His battle mask was up, a habit Megatron had noticed since they began construction, but the Prime himself looked relaxed. As Megatron approached the mech dusted off his hands on some organic cloth before reaching into his subspace and provided a datapad.

"Oh please don't tell me you wish to visit that infernal contract again." Megatron growled out as he stopped in front of the half constructed base.

The Prime rolled his optics and shook his head, "No Megatron. Actually we're missing a key material for construction."

Megatron snarled, "And this is my concern why? Get Lugnut to retrieve it for you. This is below my concern."

Optimus held up the datapad finally revealing a schematic for something Megatron couldn't identify, "A transwarp drive. It's the reason you haven't found the secret to the space bridge technology on your own yet."

Megatron paused, "...Explain."

“Having access to a space bridge is only part of the equation. The transwarp drive is the piece that actually allows for ships to pass through them safely, deconstructing and reconstructing them on the other side. It’s a quantum-”

“Enough. Enough. spare me the details Prime and get to the point as to why you simply don’t build one yourself.” Megatron rolled his optics and crossed his arms.

The Prime bristled but continued anyways, “We can’t. According to Bulkhead earth doesn’t have the raw materials.”

“So what is it you propose we do about it Repair bot?” Megatron rapped a digit in his arm trying to convey his impatience.

“Easiest way? We steal one from an existing ship and modify it for the bridge. See now ships are manufactured with them inside them instead of in the bridge itself. Your troops will be fine along the outer edges just because the ones along the borders are older models and therefore-”

“Enough with the details. I will have my troops find the part and deliver it here.” Megatron finally agreed, beginning to turn away.

“Megatron they don't know where it is on the ship or what it looks like. I'll go with whoever goes-” the small red and blue bot moved forward only to be stopped when Megatron braised a servo.

“No. You won’t. If you insist though,” Megatron looked around the teams but finally settled on the small yellow bot beside the medic. He was not only the least threatening but also the least valuable for building.

“You! Small yellow bot!” Megatron yelled over to him, “Come to me! It seems I have a job for you to do!”

Megatron watched as the Prime’s jaw hung open before regaining his composure and glared at him. The Prime seethed but made no protest as the small yellow bot came to stand beside him.

“What is it bossbot? Um... bigger Bossbot?” Bumblebee shrunk under the Warlord’s gaze.

Megatron looked over the small mech. He wouldn't be an issue for one of his officers to handle. Plus it was better to keep the Prime close.

“Congratulations. Your leader has just volunteered you to go on a little trip,” Megatron smiled and turned his attention back to the ex-Prime, “Any other suggestions you’d like to make repair bot?”

Megatron could tell the repair crew leader was holding back his EM field and for a second he thought the blue and red bot may lash out at him. But he didn't. Instead the Prime handed the datapad to Megatron and let out a soft vent of hot air.

“*That’s* the ship you’re going to get it from. Rodimus won’t provide much of a fight for the crew you already have in that sector. Strika won’t go over board and destroy the ship.” the Prime said between gritted teeth.

Megatron gritted his own dental plates and glared, “and why should I listen to a word you say since you continue to taunt me with- with-”

“Tactical advice? Because if Bumblebee is going, I'm not sending him into a war zone,” the Prime waved the datapad in front of Megatron growling out, “are you going to let us finish your construction project or not?”

“What’s going on?” Bumblebee questioned.

“You’re going to help my mechs retrieve a space bridge part your team needs.” Megatron spat out, finally taking the datapad. The grey Warframe turned towards the exit, beckoning the smaller bot to follow him, “We will get things sorted today and you will leave tomorrow. No use in wasting time.”

“Megatron!” the blue and red mech yelled after them, “If anything happens to him, me and you are going to have an issue!”

Megatron turned, facing the Prime and flashed his sharpened dental plates in a mockery of a smile, “Believe me Prime, continue to speak to me in that tone and you and I are going to have an issue anyways.”

Megatron turned and walked out of the large cavern, the small yellow bot quick on his tail. Megatron huffed and opened his comm link, “Starscream. Blitzwing. To the main chamber immediately, do not test my patience.”

Bumblebee didn't like the idea of traveling for a month with the Decepticon second in command. Blitzwing wasn't an issue, but screamer definitely could be especially since Optimus and him didn't get along.

The two larger Warframes we're prepping the small space vessel (apparently it was Blitzwing and Lugnut's) as Bee stood with Optimus who was completely silent.

Bumblebee desperately wanted to ask about how they were going to transport things without him. But Optimus’ orders were clear. Don't talk about the plan.

At least they could talk about him leaving. They discussed the situation the night before. Ratchet had made the biggest deal but there wasn't much to be done. So now he stood in front of the shuttle prepared to embark with a nightmare and a friend.

A friend who turned out to completely ignore him since he arrived.

Blitzwing hadn't acknowledged Bee since that weird meeting a while back. Even when Bee would wave, Blitzwing would hold his gaze stoic. Or on a good day his angry persona would snarled back at him.

No more meetings at the lake either, even though Bee had waited there a few nights.

To be completely honest Bee was kinda hurt.

And now he had to share a cramped ship with the Decepticon for two whole months! Talk about awkward.

“It's time to go repair bot!” Starscream yelled from the ship as he and Blitzwing both entered the shuttle.

Bumblebee looked to Optimus who gave him a reassuring smile. Bee smiled back, adjusted the toolkit he held in his servo and walked up the ramp and onboard.

The ramp closed immediately behind him. The first thing Bee noted was how small the ship was. Even compared to the Orion the ship seemed cramped. The main control room was just down a slender hallway four doors lining the sides. Bee took his time noting the contents of all four rooms; two berth rooms, a store room and the engine room. Not to mention everything was painted that awful Decepticon purple.

Eventually he made his way to the main control room. Starscream and Blitzwing both sat at a console each. Bee noted no place for him and resigned himself to stand behind Blitzwing's chair.

"We should have a team name or something." Be said, trying to break the silence, "The Autobots always name their teams. The wreckers... Special Operations... ya know."

Starscream looked back and rolled his optics, "Firstly, do we *look* like Autobots to you? Secondly, We're meeting up with Strika and retrieving a space bridge part. There is no need for a team name. Thirdly, shut up."

"Well what's the ship's name? We could just name ourselves after that" Bee offered. This name game at least distracted him from the fact he was going to spend a whole month with them. It sucked not using space bridges.

"Ze ship doesn't have a name." Blitzwing added curtly in his icy persona, "It's a transport ship. Nothzing special."

Bee pondered for a moment, "No we definitely need a name."

Suddenly, as if someone had given the order (which Megatron likely had) the ship took off. Bumblebee lost his footing for a minute and had to grab onto Blitzwing's chair as they sped out of the atmosphere.

It took a few minutes but eventually they were free of the Earth's gravitational pull.

As they entered space, Starscream hit a switch and took his hands off the controls. Blitzwing had opened some sort of game on his console entertaining his random personality.

"Awe come on guys! What about something like a mix of our names?" Bee moved in front of the consoles to look both mechs in the faces.

"How about, 'Team *shut-it-and-maybe-you'll-make-it-out-alive*'?" Starscream hissed.

Blitzwing laughed in response but kept his attention on the game he was playing.

Bumblebee huffed, "we've at least gotta name the ship. Or else this isn't a real mission!"

Starscream growled, "If it will get you to shut up for a cycle or two we'll name it."

Bumblebee smiled, "okay okay so we're off to go get something and we're a mixed faction crew... Decepticon generals and a space bridge technician...hmmm..."

Starscream rolled his Optics, "The point of a ship name is to intimidate your enemies. At least pick something good. Besides, I should have last say. I'm the Captain."

Click-whir. Blitzwing finally peeled his attention from his game switching to his angry mode, "And who said zat?!"

"It's obvious," Starscream leaned back in his chair motioning to himself, "I am Megatron's second

in command after all.”

“Usurper.” Bumblebee finally decided.

“Vhat?” Blitzwing questioned.

“Usurper. It’s like the fanciest work I know. It’s someone who steals power from someone else. You know... Because Like we're gonna take over Cybertron or whatever. Besides sounds cool.”

The deck went silent for a moment.

“I like it,” Stascream finally stated, “but it needs a prefix. Something like... Captain Starscream's Great Ship Usurper!”

Blitzwing growled, “No Vay!”

Bumblebee tapped his foot on the deck,” No no. The Warlord's Usurper. There.”

Click-whir. “See now that sounds like jou’re talking about Megatron and not the Autobots,” Blitzwing replied calmly.

“The Tyrant Usurper.” Starscream finally stated, “that one could go either way. Autobot or Decepticon.”

“Okay.” Blitzwing finally relented, turning back to his game.

“I like it!” Bumblebee smiled, “It’s perfect!”

“Alright, now we’ve decided that you can shut up now repair bot.” Starscream crossed his arms and rolled his optics once again.

Bumblebee smiled and sat himself on the floor. Pulling a small game system from his subspace he turned his attention to the vast space in front of them.

At least things were starting well.

“You drank decomposed animals?!” Jazz squealed and dropped his energon cube on the table in front of him, “I think I’ve lost my appetite.”

Prowl didn't laugh but he did smirk at Jazz's repulsion, “We ran out of energon the first week. Of course we had to find alternative fuel sources.”

Jazz made a disgusted face, “Still gross mech. Still gross.”

Prowl sipped his own energon cube. Finally having real fuel felt good. Energon was smoother and definitely easier on the systems than oil or gasoline could ever be, even if it was military rations.

Prowl had settled relatively easy into the cadet position Jazz had found him. Well... relative to fighting against your crazy superior officer. Besides, it's not as if he had anywhere else really to go; His old teacher was dead and the dojo all but destroyed. And if he had any hope of finishing his cyber-ninja training it was with Jazz here in the academy.

Not that Jazz was around all the time either. Jazz had a nice job up at Fortress Maximus but still came down to the barracks when he had time to refuel with Prowl, which he appreciated.

Appreciated very much. Prowl was never the best at making new friends and that was ever more apparent now. He was older and had more training than the other cadets in his group which made things awkward for him. Prowl found himself pushed out of the group more often than not.

Times like that always made him miss earth and the repair crew.

Jazz waved his hand in front of Prowl's visor, "Earth to Prowl. Ya in there?"

Prowl returned to sipping his cube, "Apologies. You were saying?"

"I was askin' if you had anymore of your weird recharge dreams." Jazz smiled and leaned on the table.

"It wasn't a dream. Or a memory purge. There were mechs on the Stealhaven Jazz. Now I would appreciate it if you would stop treating me like I have a malfunction." Prowl sighed, tapping his digits on the barrack table.

Jazz frowned, "The security system would have woken us all up. It's that simple Prowl. Not to mention the cameras saw nothing. And if you're that concerned go to Sentinel."

Prowl fell silent, the ghost of both mech's hand holding him to the stasis slabs still tingled his plating. Truth was Prowl didn't really like Sentinel Prime. The dark blue mech was was plainly annoying and Prowl had the inclination the Prime would find a way to make the situation about him.

Something made a small 'ding noise' and Prowl looked up to Jazz.

"Sorry mech," Jazz apologized and stood up, "I've gotta get goin'" Jazz chugged the rest of his cube and turned to leave but hesitated.

"Don't worry too much Prowl. Things 've been kinda crummy but it'll get better I promise."

Prowl only nodded in response.

Jazz frowned but turned and made his way to the exit.

Prowl was alone again. Alone in a room full of cadets. Alone in a room filled with whom he was supposed to connect with; to become part of the great Autobot machine with.

Optimus had never treated him like a cog in the machine.

Then again Optimus was working with the Decepticons so did he really count?

No. He didn't.

Prowl chugged his own cube, only prolonging the drink for Jazz's sake. He stood then, deposited the cube and made his way out of the cafeteria.

The academy was bleek. Walls grey and metallic. They were obviously build after the war built out as raw material became more and more scarce.

Prowl hadn't spent too much time in Iacon in his youth. The city seemed ugly to him now; Ugly and way too loud. Not just noise wise but in the entire way it functioned. The mechs never paid

attention to their surroundings, always bouncing from place to place. There was no stillness here.

It somewhat made him miss the organic life on Earth.

There was a lot he missed about Earth even though he had only been there for a while.

The lunch break ended all too quickly.

Back to the afternoon exercises Prowl supposed.

Megazarak awoke with a start. His old systems restarted with a whine as his optics came online and he sat up suddenly. Something was wrong. He ran a basic systems check but nothing came up wrong. So he checked any external data he could find.

His internal clock read a week later than it should.

Megazarak let out a large gust from his vents and rubbed his comm array. Oh Primus not again.

Megazarak took a moment before pulling himself up off the berth and making his way to the cockpit.

Nova sat inspecting a dated map up on the ship's display making wild motions at the monitor.

"You should have woken me from stasis the moment you got lost Nova." Megazarak smoothly stated as he walked into the small room.

Nova jumped, turning around to face the warframe.

"I-I...You need your sleep you old rust bucket!" Nova crossed his arms and pouted, turning back to the map, "This is the last straw! We're buying a proper navigation system!"

"That," Megazarak countered, "Or I stop going into stasis for our short flights. Besides. We're the same age."

Nova pointed back to the screen, "I think we're here..."

Megazarak made his way to the map and scanned it over, "Are you sure we're even in the quadrant? Primus and the thirteen you have the *worst* sense of direction."

Nova huffed and crossed his arms over his scared chassis, "My internal navigation systems are *fine* thank you. Space travel is just *dumb*."

Megazarak couldn't help himself but to smile at the smaller mech's cute outburst. Remembering something he had watched a set of organics partake in on one of the planets on the edge of Decepticon territory, Megazarak picked up the smaller mech. Nova yelped as he was lifted into the air yet Megazarak chuckled himself and pressed their lip plates together.

Metal clashed against metal. And although Nova was caught off guard he eventually understood what was happening and joined in, matching the warframe's pace. Megazarak smirked and eventually pulled away.

When they parted Nova scowled, “The organics from Garo-9?! Really?!”

Megazarak couldn't help himself but laugh.

Chapter End Notes

I'm on break this week so there will likely be another update this weekend!

I also am super conflicted about what i should and shouldn't involve in this fic just due to not wanting to focus on too many things. But this is my fic Damn it!

(Is that Starscream character development i see in the distance?)

Also, on that weird transwarp drive mumbo-jumbo; The newer Space bridges are build without them as they are now located on the ships themselves. Work on the edges is dangerous as such the Bridges located along the edge of autobot territory have yet to be upgraded and therefore still contain them.

Next Time!

Adventures on the Tyrant Usurper!

Prowl meets an old face he doesn't recognize.

Optimus gets caught in a awkward situation.

Thank you everyone for the comments! I love to answer them and they always help me write more!

Interface: A Great Team Building Activity

Chapter Summary

Optimus and Megatron mention things that probably should be talked about more.

Bee tries to get some aft but gets eaten instead.

Prowl works for the enemy.

Chapter Notes

I knew i said this chapter would be last weekend but that was before i had to write and rewrite certain sections over again (I'm still not 100% on this chapter) But it's here!

Alternate titles for this chapter included;

The Bots and the Bees

Wait, Decepticons are the conservative mechs for once!

How to avoid arguments step 1: carry a paint can at all times

Setting up mechs for the future

Wait... We still don't have a clear antagonist?!

Anyways, Thank you all and Enjoy!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Optimus moved silently through the Decepticon base, keeping his pace silent and steady. It was unlikely he would be punished if he was found in the Decepticon base this late at night but he would rather avoid the audial ache.

Optimus reached the worksite and immediately set to work.

Optimus lit the welding iron and got to work on the back section of the platform. The light of the flame cut through the darkness of the cave not aided by the darkness of the night. Optimus wasn't bugged by the darkness. It was odd but he found the sense of solidarity comforting. Condensation settled on Optimus' frame swiftly as the cool of the cavern contrasted the heat of his own systems.

Optimus whirled around aiming the torch at the chassis he only now realizes was *way* too close for comfort. Without thinking he held the torch out, attempting to cause any damage he could. The dark didn't seem so comforting anymore.

The chassis yelled and moved back swiftly, a large black mark forming on it from the flame. Now further back the light shone revealing the rest of the mech attached to the chassis. In the glow of the

flame Optimus' optics could make out the dark grey and maroon painting of said mech.

Megatron.

"You fool!" he yelled snarling at the repair bot, "Do you always wield your construction equipment as a weapon?!"

Optimus sputtered but kept the torch up for the light, "Me?! You're the one who has no concept of personal space!"

Optimus could make out Megatron clutching the scorch mark with a glare on his faceplates, "You're the one out of place Prime. I have every reason to be here, you on the other hand should not be back for another few hours."

Optimus frowned and turned back to the metal he was working on in attempt to close off the conversation, "We are down one mech Megatron. I would rather not fall too far behind schedule." and with that he brought the torch back down to where he left off, the noise of it drowning out any further noise.

Optimus didn't realize what the shift in air pressure around him until it was too late.

Megatron's touch was gentle but it didn't prevent panic from rising in Optimus' spark. The Warlord's hand wrapped around his own and guided it down and away from the metal piece slowly. Fear prevented Optimus from making any move of his own.

Last time Megatron had been this close had been...

The metal against his spark...

The flash of white pain...

Optimus wheeled around again, this time with the full intent of consciously causing damage with the welding torch. Yet Megatron too was expecting the movement and so moved back quick enough to avoid another burn to his plating.

"Careful there Prime. You may hurt someone with that." Megatron grinned, on the verge of chuckling to himself.

"You've resorted to teasing then *my liege*." Optimus spat back. Optimus could still feel the impression of Megatron's hand on his.

It burned.

Megatron relaxed his posture and actually chuckled then, “Can’t you take a little teasing? What a sensitive Autobot.”

Optimus growled lowly, “When it comes from you? No. Now do you want your space bridge built or not?” Optimus kept his glare steady towards the warlord, “And for the *last time* I’m not an Autobot. Not anymore.”

“Sensitive.”

Optimus fumed; half convinced he was spewing hot air out of his vents. He stepped forward, using the torch to light more of Megatron himself. Optimus noticed the warlord holding something in his other servo and suddenly forgot his rage.

“Paint cans? Making me take your colours as well as your brand now?” Optimus inquired, motioning to the large paint buckets Megatron held.

Megatron looked as if he suddenly remembered the cans in his hand, “Oh. No. Blackaracnia just secured them. I was going to talk to you in the morning. You will need to go through a repaint.”

Optimus shook his head in response, gritting his dental plates.

“Not your full paint job you fool. You and your team are missing clear indication for construction mechs.” Megatron huffed. When Optimus made no clear indication of understanding he continued, “Your black and yellow stripes? For safety.”

Optimus looked down to his own plating, was quiet for a moment then said, “Don’t you think we’re painted bright enough already?”

Megatron’s face fell, “You’re telling me that because you’re ‘painted brightly’ you’re not given clear markers that you are in fact construction mech and not combatants.”

Optimus shrugged, “It’s not really uncommon for mechs in civilian jobs to have some sort of military training. And it’s not uncommon to be shuffled around for whatever industry is in demand.”

Megatron finally put down the paint cans, moving his servo up to pinch his nasal ridge, “you’re telling me you just perform whatever functions your superiors tell you to. Without question?”

“I would have thought Shockwave would have told you a bit more about Autobot structure.” Optimus rolled his optics.

Megatron growled, “He has more important things to do then report on cultural differences. Yet here you are telling me the council *still* hasn’t moved past it’s functionalist days!”

Optimus turned back to the metal he was working on, suddenly a bit self conscious, “I wouldn’t quite call it functionalism. More like... well the human concept of Communism, taking liberties with the definition.”

“You’ve thought about it then,” the large grey mech commented. This time he came to stand beside Optimus, keeping a more respectable distance.

“I’ve had the time,” Optimus replied, “again it’s not exact.”

“So what? You enjoy learning about human politics? Casually?” Megatron was leaning on the platform now in a much more relaxed pose.

Optimus brought the torch back up, slightly put off by the turn in conversation, “I read whatever Sari can convert into a readable file for a datapad. One of them just happened to be a commentary on Government types. I had to do some of my own research to fill in the context.”

Yeah. Research. As if that teacher robot Sari had actually provided relevant information. Instead Optimus found himself listening to tangent after tangent on things he didn't even want to know.

Megatron looked over the repair bot with a sort of understanding and stood from his leaning position, “What I wouldn’t have given to have some good reading material when I was a nothing but a head.”

Optimus found the mood magically lightened. So much so he actually grinned in response, “Well if you ever return to being a disembodied head I’ll be sure to bring you something to read then.”

Megatron chuckled, “I would appreciate it.”

Conversation died out for a moment and Optimus brought the torch back to the metal, continuing the welding process. After the piece was finished, he tossed it aside. The warlord watched, and eventually motioned back to the paint.

“At least have the large green one change his colours. He blends in with the walls.” Megatron moved toward the cavern exit, “In the human vernacular... Goodnight Prime.”

“Goodnight Megatron.”

It didn't take long for Bumblebee's excited mood to drain down to boredom. The deck was usually quiet; Blitzwing played some weird Decepticon game while Starscream sucked most of his attention into monitoring systems or writing things on a datapad (Bee was convinced they were schemes to kill Megatron). And when the war machines did talk it was usually formal, short and excluded Bee. Any real conversation he did start died quickly.

The worst though, was probably his watch cycle. With only two private berth rooms and a lack of detection systems for oncoming ships someone on board always had to be awake and watchful. So they shared the responsibility. But being awake alone for several hours alone was almost physically painful for the lack of things to do.

It was his third watch cycle (when he had beaten the game he had brought along for the trip) that Bee began looking for something new to do around the ship.

There was always the usual way to end his boredom.

Bumblebee gathered up what courage he could, the last few times hadn't gone the best. That was fine. Things change. He still had it.

Bee opened the door to Blitzwing's berth room and entered the room, the door closing automatically behind him. The room was dark and so Bumblebee let the light of his Optics guide the way to the berth where the triple changer laid.

Blitzwing's face was stuck on his cold one, good optic closed and vents slowly providing the room with cool air. He slept on his back, his wing spread out on the berth.

Bumblebee tapped his wing softly and when that gained him no response he ran his hand long it softly. Eventually he made his way up to Blitzwing's cannons. The warframe was cold to the touch, especially the cannons themselves-

“Vat are you doing Bumblebot?” Blitzwing's voice startled Bee who jumped at the sudden voice.

Bee straightened himself out beside the berth, retreating from his position over the war machine, “I’m bored.”

Blitzwing sat up as if he hadn't been recharging at all and Rand his hand over his faceplates, “Zat is not my issue-”

“Do you want to interface?” Bumblebee got out before he lost the nerve, stepping towards the berth so that his pelvic span pressed against it.

Click-whir, “Vhat?!” Blitzwing's angry persona shouted at him. The once cool air in the room suddenly turned hot and Bee immediately regretted his decision.

“Interface! I stick my connector into your port, because there is no way your connector is fitting inside *my port* and we share a charge? Don't tell me you Decepti-freaks don't interface!” Bee stumbled out. Interfacing among crew mates was normal! It improved moral and crew relations! Plus it was just fun.

Sure he wasn't the most popular bot to interface but surely he was better than *Lugnut* and Blitzwing had been traveling with him for stellar cycles.

And *technically* he had interfaced with a Decepticon before of Longarm counted; back in their cadet years and he had no issue with it.

Click-whir. “Ze autobot wants to swap paint wiss me?! Not likely!” random giggled to himself.

“‘m not an Autobot Blitzzy...”

Click-whir. Red faceplates yelled, “How dare you imply I would!”

Click-whir. The cold air was back, “Vhy would you even think I would *interface* with you?”

Bumblebee took a moment to process the personality shifts before attempting to respond, “Crew moral? You’ve been ignoring me and oI thought we could just... Look Blitzzy most mechs don’t question it and they just-”

Click-whir. Great. Red, “Most mech’s don’t sneak into other mech’s berths and ask to interface! Vhy would I even want to with someone so weak!?”

“Weak?!” Bee shrieked, “If you didn’t want to you could have said so! You’re the one with too many screws loose! I take it back! Who would want to use your port anyways!”

“Get out!!” Blitzwing yelled back, now standing, looming over the repair mech.

“Fine! Prude!” Be stomped towards the door and slammed it as he exited.

Bee stood there alone for a beat. The weight of both his and Blitzwing's words sinking in.

The door in front of him immediately opened, revealing a *very* cranky Starscream.

“If you two don’t quiet down I will **turn this ship around and replace you both with drones!**” Starscream seethed, but paused when he looked down to the yellow bot.

Bumble had his servos balled into fists as he stood in front of the seeker, glare pointed. If looks could kill the entire ship would have exploded.

“Go back to stasis Decepti-creep!” Bee yelled, storming back to the main deck, throwing himself onto Starscream's chair.

Bee heard a long vent behind him and the sound of a door closing.

And he was alone again.

If Bumblebee thought he was excluded before, this was total isolation. Blitzwing refused to acknowledge his existence, and Starscream only gave him passing confused glances and passed his energon rations (which kinda made him miss oil oddly enough).

In the end Bee fell back on avoiding the issue altogether; resigning himself to the engine room when not on watch duty. Bumblebee was no engineer. But he knew a few things from spending so long as a repair bot; enough to know that the Decepticon ship engines were primitive. Primitive in the sense that they weren't quantum engines and so operated in a way Bumblebee could at least begin to understand.

After awhile Bee became accustomed to the sounds of the rumbling engines and the comfortable heat of the engine room (which, by the way extended down underneath the rest of the ship.)

So when thing started to sound *wrong* in the engine rooms Bumblebee wanted to bring something up to the other two on the ship.

He had come up for his shift early, watching Starscream sit at the controls from a distance before finally stepping back onto the command deck.

“Um. Screamer?” Bumblebee mumbled, moving into the seeker's vision.

“What is it repair bot?” The captain drawled and looked towards the small mech, “Make it quick, I’m due for a stasis nap.”

“There’s something wrong with the engines.” Bee puffed out his chest to try and make himself look larger.

When Starscream only raised an optical ridge in response Bee cringed and continued, “They sound wrong. There’s a grinding noise.”

Starscream’s engines grumbled and he pinched his nasal ridge, “Fine. I’ll take a look.”

Starscream stood and made his way to the back of the ship, entering the engine room. Bumblebee waited and after several clicks he was back, tapping on the room Blitzwing was in.

Bee came to his side as the Triple changer opened the door. Icy (Bee had a lot of time to think about nicknames now) looked between the two mech's and ran a servo down his face, "What has gone wrong?"

"The engines sound off. You're more familiar with this ship than any of us," Starscream pointed out, motioning to the engine room.

All three mechs made their way to the engine room only to listen to the awkward grinding of the engines. A strange noise one would expect from grinding metal as a piece of metal crumples under another.

"There is an odd noise." Blitzwing commented.

Bee, familiar with the room, moved to the back of the room and dropped down into the lower area where the sound resonated and became more noticeable. After a moment of waiting Bumblebee poked his head back up from where he came to find both Decepticons watching him.

"Are you coming?" Bumblebee inquired.

Blitzwing looked away immediately while Starscream responded, "We're too big you idiot. Besides, why would I lower myself to *ship repair* ? You're the repair bot. You figure it out."

Bumblebee ducked back down, walking slowly down into the deeper parts of the ship but not before yelling back, "I fix Space Bridges! Not ships!"

Searching the ship alone was ominous. And in the end he questioned why he hadn't just gone looking himself in the first place. The tight space got warmer and warmer the further he went in until eventually it read warmer than his own internal engine temperature.

"You guys better not have left me alone!!" Bee called up, half convinced they had left.

"Don't come back until you've figured it out!" Starscream responded. Well at least they hadn't completely abandoned him.

Bee pushed himself past a cooling line and looked towards the main engines. The noise seemingly came from there, and moving closer he could finally see the cause of the noise.

Bumblebee froze.

Scraplet.

The tiny thing chewed diligently on one of the engines secondary pistons, causing an awful grinding noise as it did so. Without moving Bee scanned the area, looking for any more.

Luckily it seemed to be the only one.

Bee stepped back hesitantly, cautiously attempting to move back to the main room above him.

" **Hurry up tiny bug!** " Red called from above, jolting the scraplet from his gnawing and it's attention jolted to Bumblebee's direction.

Bee screamed; A high pitched squeal he was sure would warn the others on board exactly what was going on.

The scraplet leapt from its place towards Bee. Bumblebee turned, tripping on a cable as he did. Fumbling he stood and bolted from the opening he came from, dogging around the component of

the ship.

A hand, blunt digits reached down from the opening and Bee reached for them, grabbing hold as a sharp pain sprouted from his pede. He was yanked upwards, only to be met by the familiar grey of Blitzwing's chassis.

Only to be promptly dropped back onto the floor.

Starscream was the next to scream. If it wasn't for the splitting pain on his left leg strut Bee would have complained for the noise.

Bumblebee's focus went to the scraplet furiously making its way up his leg armor. Bee shook his leg violently, a spray of energon and oil dribbling to the floor. Out of the corner of his eye he could see Starscream lower his null rays and prepare to fire.

Bee screamed once again, the threat of Decepticon weapons stealing his focus. Before he could shoot though, Blitzwing tackled him to the ground with a loud *thud*, forming a heap of grey and purple on the floor.

Eventually Bee's frantic thrashing threw the scraplet off. Bee stood then, moving to the wall and yanking off a piece of piping. And turning back to the scraplet.

Screaming once again, he brought the pipe down. *Again. Again. Again and again* , until eventually his systems protested.

Bee's vents poured hot air as he cycled air. He looked down to the pile of mashed scraplet and dropped the pipe. It made a small *tink* as it hit the ground.

Multiple errors filled his internal display. He had a ruptured fuel line, multiple inflictions to his outer plating and his tire was busted.

The yellow mech looked to the two Decepticons across the room from him, they had separated at least, but both still at on the ground watching him.

"There was only one," Bee finally forced out, his vocalizer cracking in the process, "I'm-" He started, but found himself unable to finish. His spark fluttered with emotion. In a moment of weakness his EM field flared a combination of *pain, hurt, loneliness* before Bee composed himself.

Bumblebee turned for the door and limped out. If he was going to fix himself up, he was going to need instructions from Ratchet.

He called The Orion from Starscream's console. Curled up and bleeding slightly onto the chair, the line rang. They weren't supposed to call back unless it was a report to Megatron, but Bumblebee thought this would be a good enough exception.

Eventually he heard the tell tale sound of a door Opening and shutting signaling his crew mates descent into their own rooms.

Surprisingly he heard a pair of pede steps approaching the deck. Turning around he found Blitzwing, a small repair kit in his servos.

The line continued to ring.

Eventually Optimus' familiar face filled the screen, a look of stoicism across his face until he recognized Bumblebee. Concern followed by anger then took over his faceplates.

“What happened?” Optimus snarled, attention eventually turning to Blitzwing, “ *What did you do to him?* ”

“And then Sentinel sticks it in my-”

Prowl interrupted, placing his cube of energon down on the table in front of him, “I don’t want to hear anymore about your interfacing habits, Jazz.”

Jazz smirked, shrugging as he took a sip of his own energon, “What? Not getting any of your own?”

Prowl winced, “I don’t have any interest in it. Unlike the rest of you.”

Jazz sighed, “Really it’s no big deal,” the white mech motioned to the cadets around them, “Everyone does it. Helps team building, its not a big deal.”

Prowl shrunk in on himself. The military interfaced more than the civilians did, and Prowl himself had been propositioned by the mechs in his own squad. Likely one of the reasons he had been labeled as an outcast was his lack of interest or reciprocation.

“There are other ways to build team cooperation,” Prowl commented. In truth the act itself really didn't interest him. And so he really wanted nothing to do with it.

The familiar ping of Jazz's timer went off and the white mech stood from his seat across from Prowl.

“Sorry,” Jazz stated, “Duty calls, see ya later Prowler.”

And just like that, Prowl was alone once again.

Eventually drills began once again and Prowl found himself operating alone. He dipped and dogged, not at all challenged by the ‘group exercise’.

He dipped and dogged on the training ground, a comfortable pace setting in as he left the rest of his squad, whom he had refused to refer to as his ‘team’ behind on the course. Prowl looked back briefly behind him to see his squad aid each other over a metal obstruction he himself cleared easily.

The twins came over the hurdle first, Blue and Orange moved perfectly in time with one another as the two speedster frames climbed up together. Jetfire and Jetstorm, Prowl was sure that was their names, turned to help up smokescreen who fumbled slightly but eventually got his footing.

Prowl scoffed and continued forward, eventually coming to a stop in front of his commanding officer, a shorter femme by the designation Strongarm Major who was surrounded by a group of other bots.

As the ninja bot approached all four mechs turned towards him. Prowl recognized Longarm Prime immediately among them. Strongarm paused before scowling, “This was a *team* warm up,” She forced out, likely embarrassed in front of her superiors.

Prowl only shrugged in response.

Eventually the other three caught up, coming to a stop beside Prowl.

Strongarm Major straightened herself up and motioned to the other three mechs with her, “Cadets, Let me introduce you to Council Mech Alpha Trion, Chief scientist Perceptor and Longarm Prime,” She began, “Due to the increased Decepticon activity along the borders turns out you’ll be assigned a bit earlier than expected.”

Prowl looked towards his squad who seemed excited by the news. Prowl’s spark dropped.

“Jetfire, Jetstorm. There’s an opportunity for you with the science division. Something to do with your unique code.”

Perceptor rolled his shoulders in response as the twins approached.

“Smokescreen!” Strongarm's voice raised slightly as the white mech in front of her shifted excitedly, “You're needed on Homeland security.”

Smokescreen deflated, “Library duty really?!”

Strongarm ignored the remark and eventually turned to Prowl, “And against my advisement, it seems Logarm Prime has work for you at headquarters. Lucky you.”

Prowl stayed stoic but secretly wished he had more time here as a cadet.

Part of him wasn't ready to start new again. Not in the short time. Not this quickly. It was almost unheard of for a change this quickly according to Jazz...

It was almost like someone had organized the shift on short notice.

Prowl nodded and approached Longarm who immediately motioned for them to leave, keeping a kind tone as he did so.

And since when did Primes like Longarm come personally to pick up cadets?

“Why me?” Prowl finally vocalized, stopping as both mechs began moving out of the Cadet barracks.

Longarm smiled, a soft warm smile that seemed a little off, “The choice was only *logical* .”

Chapter End Notes

So sorta fluff... But the next few chapters will be focusing on these sort of things as the spracebridge is completed

I wanted to also start mentioning interfacing and some of the social aspects as they start heading to Cybertron and both the Autobots and Decepticons start spending more time together. So there's that o look forward to. Hooray world building!

Up Next!

Optimus is PISSED.

Blitzing feels guilty.

Prowl meets his new co-workers and learns more about the condition of Cybertron since he left.

Thank you all for reading! Fee free to comment and I Promise to answer!

This Brings up More Questions than Answers

Chapter Summary

The Tyrant Userper sees a big red dot

Optimus gets a free things off his chest.

Prowl does paperwork

Chapter Notes

Sorry this is posted from my phone so I'm sorry for any awkward typos or formatting!

I was going to wait to post this Tomorrow but I'm in a class I hate so it's going up now.
So enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Do ya have that tied off?” Ratchet's voice came through the Comm system, “Yes? Good. Now in the kit there should be what looks like copper tubing.”

Bumblebee grimaced as Blitzwing's servos moved from his leg and back into the small first aid kit. He flicked a few things around before producing a small orange tube.

“Zis?” Blitzwing's stoic personality questioned, holding up the tube.

Ratchet nodded and crossed his arms, “Yep. You’re gonna wrap that around the damage on the line and then use the sealant gun to keep it in place.”

Optimus came back on screen looking over the procedure, “A scraplet!! Do you warframes even inspect your ships?!”

Bumblebee could feel Blitzwing stiffen up as his fingers fitted the tubing piece over the damaged fuel line in his leg. Blitzwing visibly grit his teeth and Bumblebee prepared for the face plates he dubbed ‘Hothead’ to make an appearance, but he didn't. Instead Blitzwing just kept his vision focused on Bumblebee's leg; avoiding eye contact with the screen completely.

Ratchet sighed, “Optimus please. Would you let the poor mech work?”

Optimus snarled, “I’m the one that should have gone. Not Bumblebee. This isn’t right. I told you he would get hurt. And they haven’t even run into Strika and Rodimus’ teams yet!” Optimus moved away from the screen again and went back to a furious pace behind Ratchet.

“Ze tubing is in place,” Blitzwing finally looked back up to the screen, attention on the medic.

“There should be a mesh sheet in there too,” Ratchet rolled his shoulders and continued, “Yer gonna have to secure it to the inside of his leg plating so it doesn’t tear off later. It’s a temporary

fix but it'll work until I can get a look at him."

Blitzwing looked through the kit and pulled out the mesh, lining it up the the large hole in his plating. His servos were large, cold and a bit clumsy but he worked the best he could. Picking up the soldering iron the larger mech began attaching the mesh.

"So how long you two been friends?" Ratchet said, looking over the procedure.

"AHH!" Bee yelled as the soldering iron hit some of his more sensitive cabling.

Blitzwing had jerked his hand and now looked directly to the screen, "Vhy would I be *friends* with a tiny Autobot like *him*?" Blitzwing spat, stopping his work.

Bumblebee growled at the warframe, "I'm *not* and Autobot anymore! Why would I want to be *friends* with such a freak anyways?"

Ratchet looked between the two, paused for a moment and then grumbled, "Blitzwing ya got your hand inside Bumblebee's leg. You aren't enemies anymore.

Click-whir. Bumblebee looked up to the red faceplates now snarling at Ratchet "Are you implying somesing Auto-scum?!"

Ratchet didn't flinch. Bumblebee watched the screen carefully as Optimus stopped pacing in the background t watch the interaction.

Eventually Ratchet spoke again, "Alright, you win. Besides," Ratchet's attention turned to Bee in the chair, "It would make things kinda *awkward*. Wouldn't it Bumblebee?"

Bumblebee shrunk back in the chair but before he could respond the click of another bot entering the room caught his attention.

Starscream walked onto the deck with his head held high and cleaning his hands on a small rag, "A secondary piston, we'll be a bit slow until we can get repairs done but we'll be fine," he looked to the screen, "Oh medic! Optimus! Perfect, you two can deliver the news to our most glorious leader. We'll be maybe a week late at best. Two at worst."

"What?!" Bee shrieked, jolting his leg. Blitzwing growled in response, pushing the leg back down on the chair and resuming his work.

"We had a scraplet Bumblebee," Starscream tossed the rag and crossed his arms, "as you likely know they can cause quite the amount of damage."

Click-whir, "HAHA! I'm just surprised jou actually did vork for once!" Blitzwing's random personality laughed out loud.

Optimus returned to the screen with his battle mask now engaged, "I have something to discuss with Megatron anyways," he spat with an unusual amount of venom for the red and blue mech. "We can tell him."

"Perfect. Toodles!" Starscream leaned over and cut the line immediately.

Click-whir. "Are jou fragged in ze processor?!" Blitzwing snarled, red faceplates on full display, an angry glint in his visor. "Ze medic vas instructing me jou fool!"

Starscream waved his hand and sat in the opposite chair, "You were basically done anyways. He'll

be fragile but it will work; Not that Autobots were not fragile to begin with.”

Bumblebee clenched his fists, “Hey! I take offense to that!”

Starscream rolled his optics and placed his hand on the console in front of him. His tone was still condescending as he spoke but it now held an edge of certainty to it as he spoke, “It’s true, but unimportant. Besides-”

Starscream tapped a few buttons on this console and a few things came up on the display in front of Bumblebee in Blitzwing; including, but not limited to a large red proximity beacon.

“Does either of you know how long this has been here?”

Optimus and Ratchet met back up with Bulkhead at the worksite. Bulkhead had been working early and Optimus suspected it had something to do with Bumblebee's trip to space but didn't ask questions. Optimus knew the feeling all too well. Between Prowl and Bumblebee...

Optimus didn't dwell on it.

Bulkhead took the news of Bee's injuries about as well as Optimus had expected. In the end they would have to replace a few sheets of metal but no major damage had been done.

Work didn't begin on schedule. Instead all three mechs sat, nervously discussing anything that could be done about the situation.

But there was a silent, unspoken issue; Nothing could be done that wouldn't put their plans for returning to Cybertron at risk.

They said nothing about it, staying true to avoiding talking about the plan but that truth hung heavy in the air.

Bumblebee or Cybertron.

Optimus held his head in his hands, “Screw it,” he stated. “Let's just pack Omega and go. ”

Ratchet leaned over and put an arm on his shoulder. “Starscream and Blitzwing aren't out to get him.” Ratchet leaned forward and voice was soft, almost silent as he spoke, “You may have the option of reliving all this but we *don't*. We aren't giving up because of an accident.”

Optimus shuttered. He didn't want to lose another one. Not after all this. Not another teammate.

Ratchet leaned back voice louder again, “Keep your head down, and let's get this done.”

And so they set to work for they day.

Optimus set himself to work cutting metal. The pace was constant and the aggression of slamming his axe down on something felt therapeutic.

Crack.

Crack.

Another one done.

Crack.

Crack.

Another one done.

All too soon they took a break to refuel. And Optimus found himself what to get back to the mindless work. Things had gotten too complicated too fast and now he found himself craving some silence in his own head. For once he just wanted a quiet day to reorganize his own processor-

“Prime!”

An all too familiar voice rang out through the cavern.

Was a day too much to ask?

Optimus looked up from the oil can in his hand to the warlord waltzing into the cavern. The scorch mark from a few nights back had at least been repaired. Megatron held a datapad at his side as he approached, the screen glinting softly in the light.

Bulkhead immediately got up and walked back to the platform and Optimus didn't blame him.

Ratchet thankfully stayed behind, sipping his oil finely as the warlord came to a stop in front of the two of them.

“Megatron. Is there a reason for your visit?” Optimus said through his battle mask, trying desperately to keep the anger out of his voice.

“Prime.” The warlord glared at the medic swiftly after acknowledging Optimus as if to signal for Ratchet to leave.

Ratchet stayed put.

Megatron resorted to ignoring him apparently and turned his attention back to Optimus, “May we talk in private?”

Optimus hesitated but eventually stood, “As you wish Megatron.”

Optimus looked back to Ratchet who held a deep scowl on his face but continued forward anyways, following Megatron back into the depth of the caverns.

The walk was silent, the only sounds being their pede steps on the cold rock floor. That was until they came into the main chamber. Several consoles lined the walls and the meeting table hadn't been moved since their contract debate.

Megatron turned from in front of him and passed him the datapad, “For your spare time. It’s at least Cybertronian.”

Optimus raised an optical ridge in confusion before turning the device on and looking through the files. “Towards Peace?” He questioned, “You want me to read your *autobiography*?”

Megatron gritted his teeth, “It’s a collection of criticisms of Cybertronian society back when I lived there. At least the first part is.”

Optimus moved over to the table and dropped the datapad onto it, “I’m not reading it.”

Megatron came up beside him, face stern but slightly amused, “What? Scared of a bit of truth?”

Optimus turned to the warlord, teeth bared and EM field lashing out violently. Perhaps it was Bumblebee's injury or simply pent up aggression but Optimus found himself with a distinct lack of self control.

“Megatron are you that *dense* ? Perhaps I didn’t make myself clear last time we spoke politics. The council you knew, the one who started your oppression is *gone*. It was them who forced Ulta Magnus to have to take larger military actions against you and your uprising. By the time he came into power things had escalated to a point he has no *choice* . Functionalism is *gone* .” Optimus seethed out, “ *Towards Peace* is outdated. It holds little relevance now and it seems you forget that.”

Megatron took a moment to react but the snarl that eventually came out of his vocalizer was deep and menacing, “You are a *fool* if you think your new military run council is any better than the old one.”

Optimus grit his dental plates together and pointed to the datapad, “Perhaps if you learned a bit more about the modern issues you wouldn’t be so bent on killing all Autobots!”

Megatron smacked his hand down on the table, causing it to wobble and shake, “You are a plague that rots Cybertrons surface!!”

Their EM fields were clashing now, a hot mix of anger and resentment between the two. Optimus had had enough.

“I, for the last time” He began, “am not *Prime*. *I am not an Autobot anymore*. And all of this,” he said, motioning to the datapad, “is an issue that will have to wait.”

Their EM fields clashed for a moment, neither of them wavering.

“Your complacency only contributes to the issue.”

“Oh!” Optimus growled, “As if calling for mass genocide solves everyone’s problems! It’s not as if you have a second in command who wants to kill you every five seconds! You have no regard for Civilians, putting inexperienced mechs into war zones in a petty retaliation to try and control others! Your system of tyranny is *sooooo* much better!”

“If this is about that yellow brat-”

Optimus immediately interrupted him, “You threw a non-combatant into a situation he’s not prepared for! And now they’re trip is going to be delayed and he’s injured!!”

Megatron’s field immediately pulled back in on itself. The warlord himself took a step back, his tone somewhat calmer, “You care too much for your subordinates.”

Optimus took a breather before responding, his own tone softening, “You don’t care enough.”

Both mechs had calmed significantly at least and Optimus found himself a little more relaxed over the situation. He was also significantly relieved that the topic of politics had been dropped.

“I’m assuming it wasn’t critical then,” Megatron remarked, “How long will the delay be?”

Optimus sighed, leaning himself on the table, “A week at least. Two at most. It doesn’t matter too much, with the construction delays we should be finished around then anyways.”

Megatron looked away and paused for a moment before speaking again, “It’s not ideal but I suppose it’s fine. The reading was not the only reason I called you here though.”

Optimus raised an optical ridge, still somewhat on edge.

Megatron moved over to one of the consoles and typed something in swiftly. Eventually a star map around Cybertron appeared on screen, the colony planets highlighted, “My generals have been showing some concern regarding the validity of my plan.”

Optimus kept quiet, silently wondering what this had to do with him.

Megatron turned back to him, “Tell me, mech who can see the future, How does the cybertronian invasion go?”

Oh. So that's what this was about.

Optimus walked forward, towards the screen. He found some solace in the familiarity of the star systems. Eventually he spoke still with a hint of venom, “Well. Shockwave can secure the Allspark for you now that it’s back on Cybertron and all major obstacles have been removed from play. ”

Megatron scoffed, “That was expressively bland. You can’t really see the future can you? If you could you would have prevented you teammate from being harmed. Or at least prevented him from being sent away in the first place. Somethings are too good to be true.”

Optimus snarled slamming a hand down on the console, “What? So this was some sort of test?”

Megatron rolled his optics, “If you expected me to just go along with such a grandiose claim you truly are an idiot.”

Optimus seethed, but immediately reigned in his anger. There was no point on yelling at each other as they seemed to be doing as of late. It was only for a few more weeks anyways, and then he could turn around and take down the Warlord.

Optimus looked up on the star map, a sense of nostalgia feel on him as he looked at Cybertron itself. "I have knowledge of future possible events. And most past ones."

Megatron shifted beside him but Optimus kept his focus on the map, "I don't like being kept in the dark Prime. Explain this now or-"

Optimus snapped, again his instability showing through, "Or what? Kill me? That's unlikely. Kill Bulkhead or Ratchet? Bumblebee? Torture them? I have no regard for my own life and I am confident enough that I can take yours should the occasion arise."

Megatron stayed silent.

"I would be lying if I said I'm not scared of you Megatron. But I've got bigger issues on the table than you or war politics. So I would appreciate it if you let my team and I finish our work undisturbed for now."

Optimus finally turned to Megatron. The Warlord's face was stoic, calculating but Optimus paid it no mind.

"But," Optimus began again, "Your invasion will be successful." A lie. If Optimus had it his way he would warn the elite guard ahead of time and turn at Megatron at the last moment. But of course he couldn't say that straight to Megatron.

Megatron let out a small hum and looked back to the screen, "I would hope you would understand that I cannot leave any loose ends here. Including a mech who claims to know the future."

Optimus turned towards the exit; still somewhat on edge he spoke, "Then don't use me for battle strategies and leave me to my work." Optimus moved towards the exit but stopped remembering himself, "Will that be all Lord Megatron."

Optimus watched as Megatron rolled his shoulders, "No. That will be all."

Optimus left for the worksite, hoping this was the end of these discussions.

The intelligence sector at high command looked distinctively bland. Several offices and cubicles lined the room, with Longarm's office being at the back, paired with his Secretary's desk. Prowl remembered his name as Cliff- something? Leap? Jump? Something like that. Longarm Prime had mentioned something about his on the way over. He was sure there was more to the sector he wasn't seeing but for now this large room was all he was introduced to.

For being put on active duty this wasn't exactly what he expected.

Longarm was a nice enough mech though, even taking the time personally to take him to his cubicle and pass him what he began to look through to start.

Prowl was built for stealth, speed and self control.

Turns out he wasn't built for paperwork.

The paperwork was his own, of course. Files and files dedicated to his assignment to intelligence.

It was confusing.

And wasteful.

“Oh Prowl. Good to know you haven't made it too far yet.” Prowl looked up to see Cliff-whatever leaning over his desk.

“I’ve only been here for a couple hours.” Prowl retorted.

“Yeah well we have a lot try and ditch work early.” Cliff mumbled, but his tone sprang right back up again, “Anyways! The real reason I came over here was to hand you your first real assignment! And since it’s kinda related to the whole rouge Prime dealio I thought you might like it!”

Before Prowl could respond the mech in the cubicle in front of his own stood up. The mech was blue and looked to be thin to the point he must have been modified. His design was slim, with a dark blue crest, likely a sensor net, on top of his head.

“You know Longarm Prime won’t be happy you’re shuffling around work, Cliffjumper.” The Blue mech stated painfully quickly. The mech spoke so quickly Prowl debated replaying the audio if only to reaffirm Cliffjumper’s name. “I’m Blurr by the way. Agent Blurr.” The blue mech added.

“It’s another datapad from Sentinel Prime,” Cliffjumper rolled his optics, “Longarm has better things to do that sit around dealing with every little thing Sentinel brings by,” Cliffjumper added before turning his attention to Prowl, “It’s probably just something dumb about how Optimus’ paint job has changed or something. Sentinel comes by like every five minutes with something he thinks is important.”

“He left it for Longarm Prime,” Blurr attempted to reaffirm.

Cliffjumper smirked at Blurr and dropped the datapad unceremoniously in front of Prowl, “You know the rouge Prime the best. You can look into it.”

Cliffjumper turned and walked away with a tame swagger to his step and Blurr just huffed and sat back down.

Beside him came a soft whisper, “They haven't gotten along since Blurr and the Prime started fragging.”

Prowl turned abruptly to his right to find another mech pulled back from his desk looking at Prowl.

The mech held out his hand and smiled, “I’m Getaway by the way. Nice to meet you.”

When Prowl didn't move to shake his hand Getaway awkwardly lowered it.

Prowl returned his focus to his desk and put the datapad in a drawer. It could wait until after he finished his transfer work.

“Do you need help with that?” Getaway inquired, still pulled back from his desk.

“No.” Prowl finalized, tapping his stylus on his work.

“Oh. So it does speak?” Blur stood up again and leaned over the cubicle, “Hou know next time you should really speak up before Getaway starts *running his mouth* and getting us all in trouble for not doing work.”

“Of course I speak.” Prowl sat back in his chair, looking between the two mech's.

“Oh come on Blur,” Getaway smirked, “It’s not every day we get a new mech who also happens to be involved in one of the most recent scandals.”

Prowl tilted his visor, “What scandal exactly?”

“What do you mean ' *what scandal?* ’ ” Blur yelled over, “Optimus Prime on earth has been the talk of Metroplex! Of course it hasn’t been released past the Elite Guard that the Magnus Hammer is gone but still! You’re kinda a big deal! Not to mention how quickly you hot transferred here!”

Of course. Prowl looked away, almost hoping someone would pull him away from the awkward conversation.

“The Prime and I weren’t close,” Prowl finally stated. “I already told everyone what I know in the report.”

“Yeah yeah formalities, formalities,” Getaway drawled, “Yeah but what was he *like?* ”

Prowl paused, “Odd. Quiet. I guess.”

“Alright mechs stop pestering Prowler.”

Prowl wheeled around in his chair only to see Jazz. Jazz stood with hi hand on his hip and both Getaway and Blurr immediately sat back down and faced their desk, attempting to pretend nothing was going on.

“You’re here?” Prowl asked a little dumbfounded.

“Heard ya transferred. I got away from Sentinel for a moment so I thought I’d come by.” Jazz shrugged and came over to lean on his desk. He looked over the work Prowl had been Workin on and let out a vent.

"Here. I bet they didn’t tell you about all this huh,” Jazz gently took his stylus and started filling in the gaps Prowl didn't exactly understand.

Prowl watched carefully, trying to follow along as Jazz wrote swiftly.

“There ya go.” Jazz pulled back, releasing his stylus, “How much else ya gotta get through?”

Prowl looked down to the drawer he had stuff Sentinel's datapad into. Eventually he reached down and opened it up, revealing the pad, “Just this.”

Jazz looked the datapad over, “It’s Sentinel’s. It can wait. Come on. We should go celebrate your promotion.”

Jazz grabbed his arm and dragged him out of the room swiftly after that, leaving the other two mech's somewhat confused.

Chapter End Notes

Ta-da!

These chapters are actually getting slightly longer lately so that's quite fun.

Thank you all for such long and engaging comments! It helps me with motivation and I'm sure I would have abandoned this project already if it wasn't for you guys. So thank you so much.

Next time!

A chance encounter.

Megatron makes a phonecall

Things get weird on Cybertron.

Back to the Plot

Chapter Summary

This time on 'One More Time Optimus Prime!'

Megatron tries to get laid.

Bumblebee cares more than either Decepticon does.

Prowl's invited.

Chapter Notes

A long chapter! Not to mention that we're back to plot and not just on the more background stuff.

Thank you all for the comments it really does help with motivation.

Posted from my phone again so any mistakes are my own.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The Prime had become militant.

And not in a way Megatron knew exactly how to deal with. Not it a blatant 'commanding those around him' militant, but a passive militant. He carried himself with a weariness yet still gave off the aura of some sort of aggression without doing anything.

Well. He had started carrying around that stupid hammer with him.

Megatron found himself drawn to the work site more and more now, if only to watch the Prime... or ex-Prime do about his own work.

It wasn't as if Megatron hadn't suddenly forgotten the death threat he had made, oh no quite the opposite. If Megatron was completely honest... well he found it attractive in a sense of the word. Mechs as of late had resorted to submission or a roundabout way of getting under his plating. And yet this... this small mech toting around a hammer much to large for his own frame had simply come up and told him, 'I can kill you'.

Not that Megatron had believed it. Of course he hadn't. But this mech, three quarters his height had firmly stood his ground because of a ill thought through gift and a scraplet incident.

Now more than ever had he wanted to quell his curiosity about the mech.

Optimus.

Whatever his motivations Megatron wanted to know about them more and more. How did he come across his information? Why hadn't he reported back to the Elite Guard before defecting if he knew so much? Had he truly battled Ultra Magnus for that hammer? Megatron kinda hoped so on that last one.

Should he propose a sparring match? To truly test him? It was likely that Optimus would refuse. How did Autobots deal with one another?

He had tried gifting him the only cybertronian reading material he had but it had come off as offensive, back when he wanted to talk to the Prime more for a strategic advantage. And that motivation was still there. But now it was punctuated with genuine interest.

For once Megatron was at a loss for what to do or how to approach this.

So he called someone who had dealt with Autobots on a personal level before.

"A complicated situation, My ligue," Shockwave had calmly replied through the console.

"Indeed," Megatron replied, "I fear both of our work would be impeded if this were to continue."

Shockwave nodded, pondering the question for a moment, "He cares deeply for his crew, a trait most Primes exhibit. If you could, placate him on the scraplet issue and then perhaps interface with him."

Megatron leaned over the console snarling, "You want me to *what* exactly?"

"Interface my lord. The Autobots use it for social bonding. And though I too find it odd that the Autobots have become so corrupt as to degrade interface for *team bonding* it is often the solution to many of their issues."

"So what," Megatron asked, more interested in the new concept presented to him, "Even bonded? So casually?"

Shockwave's antlers shifted slightly as if he was calculating the best way to say the next sentence, "They don't bond. At all it seems."

Megatron stayed silent queuing his lieutenant to continue.

"It is believed to be a weakness," Longarm explained, "When bonded it is likely that a severed bond can be fatal. On the battlefield that can be a disadvantage as when one mech goes down another would follow. The idea was seemingly implemented in the war and has simply carried on."

Megatron stared at the screen, "So what? They have no concept of romantic intimacy?"

"Not exactly. Bonding still occurs, it is just rare and frowned upon." Shockwave concerned.

Megatron squeezed his Optics shut for a moment processing the information he had just been handed. Eventually he responded, "All I have to do is deal with his little repair bot and then frag

him and things should be fine?”

“He’ll likely at least stop toting the Hammer around in fear.”

“Thank you, Shockwave.” And with that Megatron cut the video feed.

And that is how he found himself here at night, awkwardly hanging around the mouth of the entrance to the worksite once again. He tapped his fingers along his forearm simply watching Optimus work away in the dark of the cave.

Did the Prime ever sleep?

Probably. That medic he had with him seemed quite strict...

Focus.

The Prime sat with his back to Megatron, focused on wiring in his hands. Occasionally he would roll his shoulders or neck, exposing his own delicate wiring and cables. The Magnus Hammer sat propped up against his shoulder.

It was odd seeing something so powerful leaned against someone who repaired Spacebridges of all things. But Megatron found the blue Hammer somewhat complementary to the smaller mech's plating.

Megatron didn't know how long he watched the Prime- *Optimus* work for but eventually he stood, startling Megatron out of his daze.

The Prime turned but stopped in his tracks likely when seeing the Warlord's optics.

“Megatron? Is that you?”

Megatron approached, unsure of what exactly he should start with.

“Megatron. Is there something you need? I thought I told you to leave me alone to work.” Optimus spoke slowly, his tone almost unsure.

Megatron himself summoned all of the charm he could before speaking, “I believe I may have had a lapse in judgement regarding the little yellow one.”

This wasn't an apology. It was a strategic move ment to make the Prime more comfortable with him.

Optimus shifted on his pedes before talking in a weary tone, “There's nothing that can be done now anyways.”

Was that acceptance or...

“Is that all?” the smaller mech asked, obviously attempting to end the conversation here and now. He shifted and moved forward attempting to move past the warlord but Megatron stepped in front of him, effectively blocking him.

“Megatron...”

He needed something else to say. The yellow one... interfacing... or...

“Slow down there Prime,” Should he even be calling him Prime still? It sounded right, upset him just enough... “We should talk about your branding.”

Megatron could almost see the frown behind the smaller mech's battle mask.

“Tomorrow,” Optimus looked away, “If you’re that pressed for time. We can do it tomorrow.”

That was unexpected. He had expected the Prime to refuse, to push it off.

Instead the ex-Prime moved again to try and exit. Again Megatron blocked him.

“Where are you going in such a rush?”

Optimus hesitated, obviously conflicted with himself. Eventually he shifted his hammer in his other servo and returned his gaze to the warlord. “I have to go meet someone.”

This was just making conversation Megatron assured himself, “Then let me accompany you.”

The smaller mech glared up at him, “No thank you.”

Optimus pushed his way past him now. Forcing his way through the cavern entrance and down the corridor.

Megatron decided to follow.

The ship that had triggered the sensor drifted slowly to the port side. Bumblebee stood between Starscream and Blitzwing as all three of them watched it lazily drift along.

It was longer than their own ship, and looked like it could house about double what their own ship could. It's off grey color contrasted against the dark space behind it and blended in to any space debris that passed it.

But more importantly, it was sending out a distress beacon.

“Well,” Bee looked at either Decepticon at his sides, “Who does it belong to?”

On his right Starscream scoffed and turned his back to the glass, “Doesn’t matter. We aren't stopping.”

Blitzwing, black faceplates present cackled at the ship, “HAHA! Look at ze little ship out zere! SOMEONE CAN'T CALCULATE FUEL NEEDS!!” He yelled out as if to talk to the mechs on the ship.

“Wait,” Bee turned to Starscream, “We’re just going to leave them there?”

Starscream scoffed, “There’s no reason for us to stop.” Starscream leaned against the glass and pointed at the ship over his shoulder. “No faction beacon or markers, and it's so close to the factional lines. It's either a trap or an independent ship. Not our problem.”

Starscream flicked his wings dismissively and lifted himself up and off the glass.

“Well what if it is someone in trouble!” Bumblebee kept his focus on the seeker.

“No.” Starscream hissed.

“Yes!” Bumblebee yelled back.

Bumblebee heard a small shuffle behind him and he turned. Blitzwing had gotten to his knees and in his random persona had made an awkward face.

It took Bumblebee a moment but he eventually realized the face was supposed to be a pout but his large teeth and slanted eyes made the entire display quite awkward.

Bee turned himself back to Starscream and pouted too.

Starscream looked disgruntled for a second but eventually looked away, “If it’s still here on the way back then fine. We’ll stop.”

Bumblebee smiled and immediately turned his attention back out the window.

“If you’re going to insist on following me out here you’re going to need to put this on your armor.” Optimus spoke softly as they paused long their journey to who knows where.

The smaller mech turned on the road they were walking and held out a small microchip, waiting for Megatron to take it.

Megatron didn’t move, “you lead me out into some run down corner of the city and then proceed to offer me a sketchy microchip? I’m not supposed to be suspicious?”

Optimus rolled his optics and the warlord took slight offense. He was only being rational after all.

The Prime sighed and rubbed his comm array, a nervous tick Megatron had started to pick up on, and spoke, “You’re probably going to kill me... It’s a signature dampener. Look.”

Optimus proceeded to clip the thing into one of his own joints and to Megatron’s surprise his life signature completely disappeared from any and all of Megatron’s own sensors.

Megatron could see him. Yet he could not sense him.

Optimus removed it and sighed, “I’ve withheld great information from the Decepticon cause and blah blah blah, now would you please put it on so Lockdown doesn’t see you?”

Another hundred questions filled Megatron’s processor topping the other hundred he still had. Where had he gotten this thing? Did he have more? Had he been using them to get around without Megatron knowing? Why was Lockdown of all mechs the one Optimus was meeting?

But all that came out was a soft, “Why?”

Optimus sighed from behind his mask and looked down, “Lockdown will run if he thinks he’s in trouble. And then I won’t know when he’ll be back. I only have the one-”

“I mean *why*. Why hide this, why give it to me?”

When he had talked to Shockwave the spy had assured him that Optimus had made absolutely no contact with Cybertron. This all made no sense for the hundredth time since coming to earth.

“We don't have time for this now!” the Prime glared back at him and snapped.

In the dim light of the night in Detroit Megatron could finally see how tired exactly the small mech was. Under a street lamp his optics seemed dull, plating scratched and dented faintly from construction and odd larger scars seemingly scattered themselves along his plating.

How long had Optimus been working nights and days?

Megatron snapped his own vents shut and took a moment to prevent himself from lashing back.

“Would you *please* simply explain? Starting with Lockdown.” Megatron moved to put a hand on Optimus' shoulder.

Unexpectedly the Ex-Prime immediately pulled back, emotion unreadable behind the mask. When he spoke Optimus took an odd tone, “Blitzwing put a bounty on my head. For killing you and such. With Blitzwing gone off planet there isn't much else for a choice.”

“so you're going after him?”

Optimus glared up at him once again, “Better to scare him off now than have him continuously come after me. Now we need to move. Now. Before he starts moving.”

“Do not treat me like a *sparkling* Prime. I am alive. And have more than the means to pay off a Bounty Hunter. Do not lie to the best liar there is.”

Optimus looked down once again. Eventually looking up and away, “Lockdown leaves soon. And he has something I need.”

Megatron could work with that. After all, the closer they were the more likely Optimus was to confide in him. To explain all this.

He moved past Optimus and continued in the direction they were heading.

“Where are you going?” Megatron heard the small mech call out, fumbling behind him.

“You said you needed something. So we're going to get it. And oh. Prime?” Megatron turned and flashed a grin, “If it's your only one,”

Megatron tossed the microchip back at him. “You should keep it until you finally join us. It can be your welcoming gift.”

They arrived at the outer Space Bridge at last.

Bumblebee watched closely as they descended gently onto the meteor already supporting two other ships and the bridge.

Starscream landed close to the obviously Decepticon ship. Blitzwing was already at the door giggling to himself like a small child. Bumblebee quickly joined him as they touched ground. Starscream, rolling his optics eventually joined them and opened the bay doors.

They walked out together.

Bumblebee noticed the distinct lack of Autobots despite the presence of their ship. Instead several Decepticons he couldn't name lounged around the outside of their own ship, waiting for them to show up. As they exited one of them shot up from his leaning position and stared at him.

Weird.

The largest of them, a mech... er... femme? (Bumblebee really couldn't tell) approached. The ground almost shook as she walked, she must have been at least Lugnut's size if not slightly larger.

Click-whir. Icy kept his posture tight beside Bumblebee, "General Strika. A pleasure as always."

Starscream only scoffed.

"General Blitzwing. Commander Starscream." She acknowledged, "Is this the mechanic?"

"If you're asking if I can rip out a transwarp drive, the answer is yes!" Like hell he would be ignored.

"Its... loud," he pulled back, looking almost disgusted.

"If you think that's loud...!" Bumblebee started but was cut off by a small nudge from Blitzwing's pede and he silenced himself but kept a strong glare.

The femme, or Strika he supposed turned back to Starscream and motioned to Rodimus' ship, "Well. No use in prolonging this. Put the Autobot to work."

Blitzwing placed a servo on his back and the both of them walked towards the ship. Bumblebee looked over his shoulder only to see Starscream and Strika continue their own conversation. The Decepticon who had perked up at his appearance was still staring at him too. Which was sort of weird. Bumblebee didn't like the look of his horns.

They walked into the ship, it was far more spacious than their own (How come Prime's always has the coolest stuff?) and both mechs looked around in an attempt to find the engine room.

"Blitzwing?" Bumblebee asked as they walked deeper into the ship.

"Jes Bumblebot?" Icy responded, stoic as usual.

"Oh?" Bumblebee smirked, "We're back to nicknames again, Blitzbrain?"

Click-whir. "Why not?!" Blitzwing's crazy persona cackled out. In his more unstable persona Blitzwing traced his finger along the corridor walls, as if finger painting.

“Anyway,” Bumblebee looked around the dark corridor, “Blitzwing, where... where are the Autobots?”

Blitzwing froze in the hallway and with a familiar *click-whir* was back to his stoic persona.

“Bumblebee...” He started.

“They’re dead. Right?” Bumblebee asked, looking up to Blitzwing and stopping slightly in front of him.

The cool air of space seemed to fill his vents. Blitzwing’s continued silence was telling and Bumblebee found himself kinda conflicted over the situation. He wasn’t an Autobot yet-

“I was in training. For a while,” He felt himself say.

“Bumblebee...”

“This is Rodimus’ ship I’m sure. You can tell by the paint,” Bumblebee turned back to the direction of their path, “I think Ironhide was on this ship. We were in the academy for a while together, not that we liked each other much.” The words pooled out of his mouth as sudden realization after realization hit him.

They walked the rest of the way to the engine room in silence.

The Prime was nervous.

It was the way he walked up to the factory that gave it away, clinging to the Magnus Hammer as he walked.

The factory itself looked old and abandoned, a suitable cover for this far out of the center of Detroit. Megatron looked over to Optimus who kept his attention on the factory.

“This is it Megatron.” Optimus had stopped walking and instead stood across the street.

Megatron himself stopped a but curious, “Aren’t we going in?”

“The front door?” The smaller mech asked, jumping forward, “Are you crazy?!”

Megatron chuckled, “Autobot. Do you forget who I am exactly?”

A realization seemingly dawned on the small mech and his optics widened, “Oh. You mean you’re... you’re just going to ask him for it...?”

“Barter,” Megatron corrected, “I’m going to barter for it. Now would you tell me exactly what I’m looking for?”

Optimus paused for a moment, “It’s... um... It’s a helm. A mod. Black and an off yellow. Lockdown doesn’t know it’s worth I’m sure of it.”

Megatron grinned. Perhaps he could make this a bit interesting.

“You said he was once here to capture you for my death?” Megatron smirked deliberately down at Optimus. The smaller mech's field rippled back a sort of unease.

“Yes. But you're alive and so he's leaving in the...” Optimus trailed off, looking towards the factory, “You have a plan... Don't you?”

Megatron flared his plating, going onto his toes and then falling back on himself, “I wouldn't be the leader of the Decepticons if I didn't know what to do in these situations.”

“Alright.” Optimus sighed, flaring his own vent covers, “What's the plan?”

“I need you to play ‘Little Autobot Captive’.”

“That's a dumb plan.” Optimus shifted beside him. Immediately seeming to understand Megatron's plan instantly.

“Would you rather pay a fortune for this supposed helm?” Megatron snarked back.

“...No.”

“Then we go ahead as planned.”

Bumblebee set himself to work detaching the transwarp drive from the main engine as soon as he and Blitzwing found it.

Bumblebee decided to just not to think about the others. There wasn't anything he could do anyway really.

“So...” Blitzwing started, leaning against the doorway.

“So what Blitzbrain?” Bumblebee said. Clipping another way he curled the end and heated it to prevent fraying.

“Megatron,” Blitzwing spoke softly, stuck in his stoic persona for now.

“What about the slag maker?” Bumblebee asked growing concerned.

“Ze oath. Ve take when we join...” Blitzwing seemingly got stuck on his own words.

Bumblebee stopped what he was doing and turned towards Blitzwing trying to lighten the mood, “Yeah? Spit it out bolts-for-brains-”

Bumblebee stopped moving when he saw something move in the hallway behind Blitzwing. Was that...?

“Vell we vow to... That I'm trying to say is...Megatron is going to-”

“An Autobot?!” Bumblebee gasped, looking past Blitzwing's legs in the door, watching the mech

behind him drag himself silently behind Blitzwing.

The bright yellow, blue and red mech jolted at the noise, his optics wide. He scrambled for a moment, staring between Blitzwing and Bumblebee. He looked terrified.

Blitzwing turned towards him when Bumblebee yelled and was already lowering his cannons. Bumblebee thought he had heard a soft click noise but his suspicions had been confirmed by the sudden rise in the temperature of the room.

Bumblebee didn't think. Instead he bolted, pushing between Blitzwing's legs and in front of him. Without thinking he threw himself on top of the unfamiliar Autobot.

All three mechs went silent but their vents buzzed air around them. Bumblebee looked to the bot he was laying on, taking in the damage. The mech... oh God. The mech was missing a leg. Shot off. He was leaking. Bright energon created a trail behind him.

"Move Bumblebee," Blitzwing snarled down at him. Bumblebee became painfully aware he had just thrown himself into a Decepticon's line of fire.

"No!" Where had this resolve come from? He was scared but so sure he needed to protect this random mech. An Autobot... the faction he himself abandoned.

But Bumblebee found himself not caring. Only determined to save the life behind him.

"Foolish Autobot!" Bumblebee flinched as Blitzwing spoke, "He is ze enemy!"

"You're the one that told me just because I defected that didn't mean we are now the same team Blitzwing!" Bumblebee shot back, "I'm not letting you kill an injured mech on the floor!"

Run. Run. His processor screamed at him. Memories of that night Blitzwing had captured him in the forest flooded back to him. But now, not in his Icy persona Blitzwing was much more dangerous. Bumblebee gave a passing thought to being melted to death but decided to focus on the Autobot under him.

The mech shook. He was larger than Bee, he'd be closer to Prowl's size if he could stand. His bright colors gave his faction away immediately even without seeing his insignia.

"I'll melt you both Autobot scum!" Blitzwing roared, the charge on his cannons grew. Yet he didn't fire.

Bumblebee flattened himself into the odd bot but yelled, "It could have been me!"

Blitzwing paused for a moment before tilting his head, "What do you mean?!"

Bumblebee pointed to the place where his Autobot symbol once sat and yelled again, "I was training for duty before I repaired Spacebridges! It could be me on the floor! Under er... me!"

Was he making sense? Bumblebee didn't really know but at least Blitzwing had paused, thinking something over.

Click-whir. "Fine," Blitzwing's much calmer persona stated, "I will find a first aid kit," Was all the triple changer said before storming off.

The Decepticons were creeping up on the outer edges. All reports he had come across pointed to it and all intelligence could talk about was the impending rekindled war.

With Megatron dead the Decepticons forces were scrambling taking what they could around the outer reaches. They were losing teams left and right trying to protect the outer Space Bridges.

It had been Rodimus Prime's team last. They had lost contact last solar cycle.

Jazz said Ultra Magnus and Sentinel Prime were panicking. Talks of spies and Decepticon infiltration seemed to be the newest gossip around intelligence. Paranoia was setting in to most mechs.

To top it off most mech's from intelligence had been sent off to some unknown task. Some mornings it was only him, Getaway, Cliffjumper and Blur. Though Blur had been spending a lot of time around Longarm Prime, signaling that he too was about to be sent off somewhere.

Sometimes he missed the simplicity of earth.

"Woohoo! Lost ya again Prowl." Jazz waved his hand in from of Prowl's optics. Prowl looked towards the minor in front of him and blinked several times.

"Sorry. Mind's on paperwork." Prowl responded. Returning back to sipping his daily energon.

Jazz huffed, putting down his own cube, "focus. This one's important."

The cafeteria here in Metroplex was much nicer. With individual seats instead of benches and with much nicer paint.

When Prowl didn't respond Jazz continued, "Longarm's gonna come to you all an' ask for a volunteer."

"Oh!" beside Prowl Getaway chimed in, "I would *kill* to get out of the office!"

Prowl didn't know when or how exactly the others had started sitting with him and Jazz. But all three of them had, making lunch time just as social as work.

"N'uh uh." Jazz said, shaking his head, "Ya'll are gonna let Prowl take this one."

Getaway crossed his arms and leaned back, "Yeah? Why's that Jazz Minor?"

"Well," Blurr chimed in, ever the talker, "I'm making the assumption that this is a mission specifically Jazz wants Prowl to be on. And since this would technically be Prowl's very first mission I'm also making to other assumptions. One, Jazz is also on said mission. Two, The mission is on Cybertron itself. And Three, because I just thought of it, it's probably something easier."

Jazz chuckled, taking less time to understand Blur than the others, "Ya got me there mech, I'm up for promotion. Minor to major. Plus the whole ordeal will get me away from Sentinel for a bit."

"And you want me?" Prowl asked, finally putting his cube down.

"Ya did help out with the whole Optimus Prime thing," Jazz pointed out, "And we need an intelligence mech. This whole thing could be big or it could be a small time deal."

"I'll do it." Prowl chimed in eventually. Beside him, Getaway grumbled.

Chapter End Notes

I'm so pumped for all of these plots to come together you have no idea.

There's a reason for everything and everything has a reason.

Please comment! I love reading them and they really help with motivation!

Until next time!

A Bumblebee and Blitzwing Chapter

Chapter Summary

Just Bumblebee and Blitzwing trying to betray each other and failing.

Chapter Notes

I'M BACK SUPER EARLY FOR A FEW REASONS!!

1. This chapter perfectly lines up with Valentine's day so I thought it would be cute to post
2. EXPECT SLOWER UPDATES - it is currently week 4 of my college course and so because everything is due next week before the break I probably won't be back until then. (I have 7 detailed backgrounds and an animation to get done by this weekend alone)
3. This chapter is super cute and I literally couldn't stop writing it.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

As soon as Blitzwing left Bumblebee made quick work of trying to put pressure on the Autobot's leaking leg. The wires and tubes were slippery and sorta gooey in his hand but he tried not to think about it too much; an odd habit he was getting into apparently.

"I don't really know what to ask first," The Autobot below him nervously chuckled, "Why can you stare down a Decepticon? Or where the hell did you come from? Where's your team?"

Bumblebee shifted his hands to try and get a better grip, "My 'crew' isn't exactly what you'd expect it to be. I'm Bumblebee, by the way."

Bumblebee didn't exactly know how to respond or explain things. Absentmindedly he reached up and itched the place his Autobot badge used to sit.

"HotShot," replied the mech. He winced occasionally as Bumblebee moved his fingers.

Bumblebee made an effort to try and figure out who exactly Optimus had told him would be on the ship. Rodimus Prime... Ironhide... there was a medic right?

"The rest of the crew, where are they?" Bumblebee asked.

"I think... I think Ironhide got away, I can't tell you what happened to First aid and Rodimus..." Hotshot trailed off.

Bumblebee grumbled to himself, "I think Optimus mentioned cosmic rust..."

"Optimus?" Hotshot startled, trying to sit himself up, "You're part of Optimus' crew?"

Bumblebee nodded slowly, unsure of where this was going.

Hotshot spat at him. Oral lubricant splatting onto his cheek and chassis. Surprised, Bumblebee leaned back and away from Hotshot, releasing his leg in the process. The stream of energon picked up again, returning to a exceedingly slow flow.

“Traitor,” Hotshot spat again, this time missing, “This at least makes sense now. Fragging glitched Decepticon sympathizer. Already got rid of your badge and everything.”

Bumblebee sat for a minute shocked, blinking dumbly at Hotshot in front of him. Eventually Bee understood and started to yell back, “It’s not like you know the whole story yourself! I just saved your spark!”

“I would rather die than be a fraggin traitor!” Hotshot yelled back.

“Well you’re not dying on my watch!” Bumblebee snapped, leaning forward once again.

Pede steps came from beside him and Bee looked up to see Blitzwing’s giggling, black face staring down at both of them on the floor. “Good to see you two are getting along!” he chimed in, immediately dripping the med kit between them.

Click-whir. Blitzwing immediately shifted to his hothead persona and returned to yelling, “Fix him yourself tiny bug!” Blitzwing moved away from the two and settled himself against the wall towards the exit.

Bumblebee wondered if it was to prevent them from running.

Bee opened the kit and shifted through it, looking for anything familiar to tie the tubes off with and stop the flow of vital fluids. He looked over the soldering iron but decided against it. The energon was too volatile to be heated reliably. Eventually he found a set of clamps and settled for that. They were the only thing he could easily figure out that would stop the leaking so they would have to do.

“Don’t touch me,” Hotshot somewhat forced out. Instead of pulling away though when Bee leaned over to him again, Hotshot stayed still.

Again his digits shifted into the mess of Hotshot's dismembered leg, using the small clamps to seal any cabling or wiring that he could. When he felt satisfied that the cabling was secure and wasn't leaking as badly he wrapped a cloth around it, to try and keep it secure and together.

“Not too bad for a first time eh?” Bumblebee tried to lighten the mood. But neither mech around him made any denial or confirmation of the fact.

In the awkward silence of the hallway Bumblebee stood up. Blitzwing was still angry but looked away from them both and Hotshot stared at this leg for a bit.

“Hide,” Bumblebee somewhat forced out himself, “Your cargo bay. The cockpit. Hide.” Bumblebee racked his processor to try and remember what Optimus had told him about the team.

Hotshot glanced towards Blitzwing for a moment then returned his gaze to Bumblebee, gritting his teeth.

“Why did you stop him?” He whispered, looking up to Bumblebee.

Bumblebee blinked a few times, looking over the mech below him, “Because no one deserves

death when they can't defend themselves. And I'm sure everyone... Prowl included would be angry if I did anything different."

There was a pause.

Hotshot moved. Slowly at first but eventually he disappeared into one of the rooms.

Bumblebee turned on his heels immediately, and went to clean up the energon Hotshot had left behind.

"Jou are a fool!" Blitzwing spat back at him as he cleaned.

"Yeah?" Bumblebee countered, "Well no one deserves to die alone on a random space rock."

Blitzwing looked to struggle with himself for a moment. "And when did you become some expert on the topic Repair bot?!"

Bumblebee stopped his cleaning and looked up at the Decepticon in front of him. Bumblebee couldn't stop himself from blurting out, "You almost killed me on earth, and you almost got me killed on this ship!" He snapped, "If the mech has a chance to live, I'm going to let him."

Blitzwing immediately swapped out of his angry persona and into his stoic one with a swift click noise.

"Ve vere enemies on earth. And the ship was an accident. Plus. Very agreed to not talk about vork." Blitzwing offered, standing finally from his leaning position on the wall.

"Well maybe you Decepticons shouldn't just kill every autobot or mech you come across!" Bumblebee stood and shouted, "At least Autobots have a god damned trial! The war is over!"

"Jou and I both know we war is about to start back up!"

"Then you might as well kill me here and now! Cuz, we're going to be your enemies!"

Blitzwing gaped for a moment, "Vhat do you mean by zat...?"

"We're going to betray you damn it!" Bumblebee couldn't stop the words flowing out of him. Even though this ruined everything, Even though this would kill him, He said it. He didn't really know why, but Bumblebee wasn't the most restrained mech to begin with.

Blitzwing stayed silent for a moment, simply staring at Bumblebee for a beat.

"Vhy...?" Blitzwing finally asked, the surprised look completely foreign on icy's faceplates.

"Because killing every mech you come across is wrong! Because Megatron will enslave everyone. Because in the end Blitzwing, I don't care why this stupid war started, I only care it ends without Megatron at its helm!"

Bumblebee huffed, his vents running at full capacity. There. It was all out on the table.

"If you kill me, Optimus is going to kill everyone else or something, I don't really know," Bumblebee struggled out. Suddenly Blitzwing didn't seem as harmless as he usually was. Suddenly he seemed like a Decepticon Elite, bent on taking over Cybertron. Suddenly, the implications of revealing everything outright came crashing down onto him.

But if Bumblebee was the only thing standing between Blitzwing and telling Megatron what

Optimus' plans were, so be it.

He engaged his stingers.

Blitzwing's face stayed stoic and unreadable "Jou... Jou're going to die if be fight," Blitzwing flared his plating out at Bumblebee, blocking the exit.

"If it gives me a chance of making sure everyone is safe, I don't care you oversized toaster." Bee tried to mimic him, flaring his own plating and sparking his stingers a few times.

"Vhy... " Blitzwing faltered, "Vhy do you fight when you know you vill lose? You attacked Lugnut and I when arrived on earth, jou went against ze Elite Guard, ze scraplet... amd now zis! Megatron vill kill your entire crew!"

Bumblebee stood his ground, "I believe we can do it. And that's enough for me."

Blitzwing stood his ground for several clicks, not responding. When Bee didn't give in, Blitzwing slumped, closing most of his vents and looking away.

"Megatron plans on killing jou all when we're done ze invasion," The warframe relented.

"...What?" Bumblebee blinked a few times, retracting his stingers.

"It's in ze oath when you become a Decepticon. Megatron assures us zat it applies to you and jour team."

All Bee could come out with was a soft, "Oh."

They stood for several more click in silence, a common theme for the argument.

"I don't want to fight you," Blitzwing mumbled. The Decepticon looked way and dragged a servo down his face, letting out a blast of cold air from his vents.

Bumblebee shook his head in response, "Me either."

Blitzwing looked back towards him, not saying anything. Eventually an odd sensation washed over him; the soft touch of an affectionate EM field.

Oh.

Oh.

Bumblebee was shocked for a moment. The implications of that field...

Bumblebee found himself giggling slightly, "We're both going to get killed."

"Ve need a plan," Blitzwing walked forward slowly.

Bumblebee found himself mimicking him.

"We should run," Bumblebee offered, "Together."

Blitzwing shook his head, “No. You need to finish helping Optimus. Save your silly Autobots. And Decepticon deserters are hunted and killed.”

Stopping in front of him Bumblebee looked up at the large warframe. Tentatively he raised a servo and placed it along Blitzwing's cold thigh. Blitzwing was cold, but for some reason Bee kinda liked it.

“What do you think we should do then?” Bee asked, looking up directly into Blitzwing's optics.

Click-whir. “Ving it?!” Blitzwing's black faceplates laughed back at him.

Bumblebee couldn't help but laugh along.

“Okay you over glitched refrigerator, let's wing it.”

Blitzwing shifted back to his stoic as they stood. Simply looking at each other.

They stood like that for a moment, Bumblebee's servo pressed against the thigh in front of him. Blitzwing was cold as he usually was in his stoic persona and Bee gave a glancing thought as to why his temperature changed based on his mood. Instead he relished in the warm affectionate field Blitzwing was emitting.

Tentatively he reciprocated the EM signal. Blitzwing's engines hummed in contentment and Bumblebee heard the tell tale *click-whir* of Blitzwing's face changing.

Suddenly he was off his pedes and into the arms of his once enemy. Black face plates pressed against his own as Blitzwing nuzzled their helms together, cackling to himself again.

“Okay you glitches. That's enough, everyone is waiting for you two outside.”

Bumblebee didn't know that voice.

Blitzwing's comfortable and affectionate EM field immediately disappeared and the warframe in front of him turned to look at the intruder. Bee was dropped immediately, falling to the floor with a thud. Standing up he followed suit, leaning around Blitzwing's legs to get a good look at the mech who had walked in on their moment.

Jerk.

Bumblebee recognized him though. The mech was the one that had stared at him outside, his large horns almost scraping along the ship's ceiling. He was purple like most Decepticons but seemed to favour grey over the traditional black most Decepticons wore.

Click-whir.

Bee's servo suddenly became increasingly hot as it rested on Blitzwing. The familiar sound of

Blitzwing's cannons lowering had Bee looking up at his angry face, more concerned than anything.

Had the other mech overheard them?

“Cyclonus!” Blitzwing yelled above Bee.

“Okay well first of all, whatever this is, I don't care.” The mech, Cyclonus apparently started, motioning between them. “Doing anything about it would imply I did. But I don't. So...”

Cyclonus moved awkwardly, shifting on his pedes as he looked away for a brief second, “Secondly, could you two hurry it up? Starscream and Strika are just about to kill each other out there.”

Cyclonus moved again, this time crouching in front of Blitzwing and looking towards Bumblebee, who kept quiet.

“You're Bumblebee right?” Cyclonus asked, seemingly trying to be polite, “You know the one who's stuck in time correct?”

Bumblebee nodded slowly, cautiously.

Cyclonus smiled, an awkward motion impeded by the holes in his cheeks, “Could you do me a favour. Tell him something for me?”

Bumblebee again nodded.

“Tell him...” Cyclonus paused, thinking over the words, “Tell him his predecessors are looking for him. And tell him that he should do what Primus tell him to. Don't Fight it. He'll know what I mean. Do you mind?”

Bumblebee shook his head.

Blitzwing above him growled and rumbled his engines threateningly.

Cyclonus stood and looked between them, “Like I said, i really don't care what you two are up to. Now If you two don't mind, I've got to go make sure that Starscream and Strika don't murder each other and everyone in the immediate vicinity.” Without another word Cyclonus turned to leave.

Bee shifted himself around Blitzwing and looked up to the mech standing in front of them, “Wait! How do you know Optimus!”

Cyclonus paused and turned back to look at the small yellow mech, “Him and I know each other from another time. Another place.”

Bumblebee stood there confused as Cyclonus made his way out. Blitzwing still had his engines roaring in a sort of intimidating display.

“Well he's a fragging weirdo. Even more than you Blitzbrain.” Bumblebee joked, turning to the still fuming Decepticon.

Blitzwing immediately returned to him stoic persona before talking, “Cyclonus has always been odd. He was the one zat asked Lugnut and I to return to earth, I wouldn't be surprised if he had an

idea this would all turn out his way.”

Bumblebee blinked a few times, the analogy hitting a cord with him, “Like... Optimus.”

“Okay, okay you really need to explain the whole Optimus deal. He fragging creeps me out.” Blitzwing commented, looking down to Bee.

“Okay okay while I finish with the transwarp drive.” Bumblebee motioned to the engine room before walking into it again, “And strap yourself in, it's kinda of fragging crazy.”

In a rare moment Blitzwing's stoic persona smiled softly, barely noticeable to those who didn't know him well.

“As you insist.” Blitzwing said and they both walked back into the engine room.

Bumblebee and Blitzwing walked out of the ship sometime after. Blitzwing carried the transwarp drive and Bumblebee carried his own tool kit.

They were greeted by Starscream yelling (Bumblebee was tempted to cover his audials) and Strika lowering some sort of weapon. Cyclonus, true to his word, stood between them, a sour look on his face. Upon seeing the two mechs exit the ship his expression changed to one of relief.

"Great! You can leave!" Cyclonus yelled, drawing everyone's attention to Bumblebee and Blitzwing.

“Finally!” Starscream yelled, out stretching his arms towards both mechs, “Let’s leave!”

Starscream immediately turned on his heel and headed back to the Tyrant Userper. Strika rolled her optics and crossed her arms, lowering her weapons.

Blitzwing shrugged and began walking back to their ship, Bumblebee followed suit. They both nodded to Strika on the way (Bumblebee stared a bit at Cyclonus too) but they too ended up back on the Tyrant Userper pretty quickly.

Bumblebee made his way to the main deck and threw himself onto one of the seats. No way after all that work was he getting thrown around by take off again.

Starscream sat himself in the other chair and began flicking switches. Blitzwing joined them shortly after, standing behind Bee and holding onto his chair.

They took off shortly after, headed back to earth.

It was Starscream’s watch first as they left. He dismissed the two others and motioned them off the deck.

Bumblebee turned to go into the berth room opposite Blitzwing's usual choice. He turned, only to be stopped by a servo on his helm.

“Awe come on Blitzbrain, I’m tired and I want to-” Bumblebee stopped as he turned to Blitzwing.

His one servo was on Bee’s helm, his other holding the berth room door open. Random grinned

down at him before guiding him into the room.

Bumblebee smiled and followed Blitzwing's hand only to be picked up as they entered the room together. Blitzwing cackled and cradled Bee jumping a little bit before landing on his back on the berth.

Bee shifted for a moment, shifting in Blitzwing's arms to find a comfortable position on the triple changer. Eventually he settled, head over the Decepticon logo and arm swung over one of Blitzwing's cannons.

Blitzwing's engines settled into a soft purr beneath him and the two of them fell into stasis cuddled into one another.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all so much for the comments! I love answering them!

And I kinda forgot the 'next time' section last chapter... Oups.

Expect a lot more 'mad love' scenarios with these two from now on, now that they actually admit their feelings.

I've always kinda enjoyed their "I'm totally not into you" act most writers take but I also think these two would be the ones to run into things without thinking. Kinda a Bonnie and Clyde or Romeo and Juliet thing.

I hope you enjoyed!

Next time!

An Optimus and Megatron chapter!! I guess Lockdown is there too.

Cockblocked by Your Past Self

Chapter Summary

Megatron thinks Optimus is hot.

Optimus is okay with that.

Actually he's really not.

Chapter Notes

I'M BACK WOOHOO!!!

Thank you everyone for the comments and support while i took a little break! You Really got me through writing this chapter like 5 different times.

This one took a lot of rewrites.

I'm also out of school for the week so possibly another update later in the week.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“He’s... well he's a new acquisition,” Megatron spoke confidently, parading Optimus around behind him and they made it through the labyrinth Lockdown called a ship.

Megatron wasn't exactly paying attention to what Lockdown was going on about. The bounty hunter wasn't one to trail on but stillegatron going his small talk somewhat bothersome. Instead, without looking behind him, Megatron paid close attention to the Prime; His pace, his venting, his EM field. Megatron only somewhat knew what they were looking for and so was relying on the small mech for any hints to what the hell looked like or where it was.

“So you’re looking to get him upgraded and battle ready?” Lockdown inquired as they finally entered his quote on quote ‘Chop shop’. “The mech that took you down, now becoming a loyal Decepticon himself. Irony.”

Mods and removed parts lined several racks along the sides of the room. The walls were dark but several spot lamps illuminated the room as they moved inside. It was comfortably Decepticon, dark and slightly morbid. There was a work desk to the back of the room and a medical slab in the center, obviously for the installation of mods.

“He’s not necessarily battle ready at the moment,” Megatron drawled, keeping his tone indifferent, “I’d like my canon fodder to at least last a few clicks.”

Lockdown chuckled, a low rumbling noise Megatron found quite annoying, “They really don’t build Autobot's well do they? All civilian function modifications. They do truly lack an appreciation for well crafted weapons.”

“You do have a point. Hence why I’m here,” Megatron pointed out continuing to glance around the room, only really responding to be polite. Megatron had been here several times before, pricing out weapons or negotiating bounties. The dim light of the room was familiar but he was still unsettled by the mech pieces Lockdown called mods.

It reminded him of Sumdac's lab.

Come on Prime. Find the helm already.

As if on cue Optimus came up behind him assuming a distantly submissive position in the door. He looked calm, and much less threatening with that forsaken hammer hidden somewhere outside. Megatron was no fool though as Optimus EM field, though tightly restrained to a close proximity, prickled with nervousness and aggravation. Megatron guessed it was only amplified without the protection the Magnus Hammer provided him with. And still his battle mask stayed up. Megatron took it as a sign Optimus wanted to get out of here just as bad as he did. Good.

Lockdown turned to a shelf, seemingly done with the small talk and now looking through the mods there. Optimus behind him took the opportunity and moved forward beside Megatron, motioning to a shelf on the far side of the room. Megatron immediately moved to the shelf looking it over with feigned lack of interest and set to looking for the described helm. Black and yellow...

There were several of them.

Megatron glanced to Lockdown, making sure he was still distracted before turning to the smaller mech still behind him. Optimus sighed silently, the only real hint of him doing so being the way his chassis shrunk. Without making much noise and making sure Lockdown was still preoccupied the small mech made his way over, sliding himself in between Megatron and the rack.

Optimus stretched up to the shelf and oh goodness. The ex-Prime may have been small, his head only coming up to the middle of Megatron's chassis but looking down the warlord watched as the Prime's pistons elongated to their longest point. Optimus was almost touching him. His aft and thighs parted slightly as he lifted one leg up to try and stretch up further. Megatron did little more than watch. Well he could do little more than that, and he didn't really want to end the moment. There was something oddly... attractive about it.

A soft ‘ *tink* ’ brought him back from staring at the brightly colored mech all but under him. Optimus was looking up at him now, and had tapped him softly, servo still against Megatron's arm. Optimus looked up at him then up at the shelf, making small nodding motions with his head. When Megatron seemingly didn't get the idea Optimus pointed at himself then pointed up.

Oh goodness.

Megatron took in a small vent before wrapping both hands around the Prime's waist. Optimus froze under his touch, obviously extremely uncomfortable with the situation. He was warm though; Warm for something so small and seemingly delicate. Megatron emphasized the *seemingly* part to himself, after all the small mech had defeated him when he first arrived on earth, and even now threatened violence against him.

And now he was holding him, his small size being exceedingly obvious now. Megatron lifted, bringing Optimus' face up to the shelf with the helms. And immediately picked up the helm he was

looking for. And just like that the moment was over.

“What in the pit...?”

Megatron turned to look at Lockdown who was now staring at them with a weird sort of confusion, hook hand up as if in the middle of a motion. Only then did the warlord realize how ridiculous they looked, him holding the ex-Prime holding a random helm from his stash.

Optimus let out a startled honk, as if someone had tapped his horn and he flailed in Megatron's arms, making an awkward effort to get down. Megatron offset with a flailing autobot in his arms dropped the squirming mech, sending Optimus down to the floor with a loud crash, dropping the helmet in the process. Megatron who had held Optimus holding the helm, now dropped Optimus who dropped the helm. Had the situation not been so awkward Megatron would have found humor in it.

“You’re fragging him aren't you?” Lockdown’s scowl unfurled into a soft smirk aimed at Megatron, “Not that I blame you. They are a easy lay.”

Optimus below him, now sprawled somewhat on the floor sputtered his engines indignantly. He took a moment to reorganize himself and stand before talking, “And what do you mean by easy?”

Lockdown kept his smug look as he replied, “Easy. You mechs will frag anything with two legs.”

Megatron only chimed in when Optimus revved his engines in offense to the comment. He took an invent before speaking, “The helm Lockdown. That's what we'll be taking.”

“Well I mean if you came all the way here for it...” Lockdown reached down and picked up the helmet looking it over, “You know this kinda looks like-”

Megatron had not seen the motion coming.

Optimus stopped Lockdown in his tracks, bringing a pede back to leverage his one servo forward, smashing the heel of his servo into the chin of Lockdown's faceplates.

The bounty hunter didn't move much but it gave Optimus the moment he needed to snatch the helm from him. In another swift motion he tossed the helmet up and behind him, towards Megatron.

Now caught up to the situation Megatron caught the helmet, actually the more he looked at it the more familiar it was.

Optimus moved again, dragging Megatron's attention back on the fight breaking out in front of him. The motion of his toss continued and Optimus brought his hand to his back and pulled out an axe and brought it down on Lockdown's chassis knocking him back.

Out of his daze now Lockdown reacted. He brought up an arm engaged a mod, which Megatron guessed was a EMP generator and-

To Megatron's surprise the small and colourful mech was expecting it and brought his axe up at the same time and cracked it done on Lockdown's elbow joint above the mod.

The axe stuck there, lodged in the joint. Lockdown somewhat gave up now, moving instead to try and get away from the brutal attack Optimus had launched on him. Optimus moved and grabbed his hook, pulling him forward until Optimus could grab ahold of the EMP generator and pulled harshly. The seems groaned for a moment but only a moment before they gave, and Optimus pulled the mod from Lockdown's frame.

Aggressive. Megatron hated to admit it may have initiated some less... used protocols regarding some sparsely used equipment.

The generator was quickly discarded and tossed to the side as Optimus made work of removing the axe from Lockdown's elbow joint. Lockdown screamed this time as it was yanked out.

"Prime. Enough," Megatron finally found himself growling. Like a dog called off from an attack Optimus pulled back, immediately putting away his axe.

"Excuse me," Optimus squeaked out before rushing out of the room, leaning down and grabbing the discarded EMP generator from the floor.

"Wanna explain to me why you 'new acquisition' all but tore my arm off?!" Lockdown growled up at Megatron once the small mech had dashed out of the chop shop. Megatron paid little attention, instead making his own way to the door, helm still in hand.

"Lord Megatron!" Lockdown called after him.

"Send me the invoice!" Megatron called, carrying the helm out with him as he chased after Optimus.

Optimus had never been that embarrassed in his life. Well he probably had at some point, but at the moment it felt like it had been the most embarrassing thing ever.

To have to be held up by Megatron and then Lockdown had almost recognized the helmet. Sure violence probably wasn't the best choice of action but he acted on impulse. He was tired. Megatron wasn't supposed to show up, and he just went full throttle once he saw Ratchet's EMP generator attached to Lockdown's arm-

"That was impressive if not inappropriate," the Warlord's familiar voice came from behind him as he charged off into the early light of Detroit.

"He was about to identify the-" Optimus paused his march as the dawning realization hit him, "I forgot the helm!"

Optimus turned on one foot, swirling around with the EMP generator still in servo only to come face to face with Megatron's chassis. It startled him, but all it took was a small step back to an appropriate distance for him to calm himself.

Megatron lowered an arm down, Yokeatron's helm sat quite settled into Megatron's servo.

Optimus looked up at the warlord, amusement clear on his face plates.

"I'm glad my violent outburst amuses you my lord," Optimus rolled his optics and took the helm under his arm.

"It's just a pleasure to finally see you in action up close. You seem to favour doing localized damage in the seams." Megatron remarked.

Optimus motioned down to himself with his free hand, "only when I'm smaller than my opponent. It's easier."

“I wonder how you would approach me then little Prime.” Despite the implications of the sentence Megatron half chuckled the words.

Megatron continued chuckling and in an odd movement tapped Optimus’ side playfully, “I also find it quite amusing you sound your horn when you’re surprised.”

Optimus could feel the energon pool in his face plates, “I don’t honk when I’m surprised!”

“You definitely honked when I dropped you.” Megatron swung again, this time tapping him on the opposite side.

“What are you doing!” Optimus’ vocalizer somewhat cracked when he spoke, a mix of surprise and embarrassment.

“Spar with me,” Megatron kept that annoying grin on his face plates. He moved forward , gently removing the helm and the EMP generator from the smaller mech's servos. Optimus wasn't sure why he let him.

Megatron placed the two objects down gently and returned to Optimus. He took a battle ready stance, legs slightly parted and arms up as if he was about to partake in the human sport of boxing and tapped the upper of Optimus’ arm playfully.

“Out here- in the manufacturing district, in the open!” Optimus brought himself into a defensive stance as another, albeit much more aggressive tap to his right shoulder this time.

“Scared prime? Live a little! You’ve been so uptight you can’t even sleep!”

Optimus sputtered indignantly at the warlord. This time though Megatron hit much harder and directly in the middle of the chest, sending Optimus back several feet, sliding his pedes deep into the pavement.

Oh it was on.

In a moment likely caused by sleep deprivation and leftover excitement from the fight Optimus shot forward, extending a grappler as he did so. The end of it found its way around Megatron's forearm. Optimus was expecting the motion as Megatron pulled back on the grappler rope and used the massive mechs strength against him.

Megatron seemingly expected this and lifted his other arm to grab the small Autobot.

Optimus had fought Megatron several times. In a moment of realization and inspiration Optimus dropped to his knees, digging them into the road below him and aimed himself for Megatron's legs.

Megatron pulled up.

Suddenly he was off the ground, dangling dangerously off the ground and in Megatron's grasp. It was times like this he wished he had wheels exposed in his root to drag across Megatron's smug face. It didn't matter. A punch would prove to be in effective so...

Optimus went for any seam he could find, in this case one on Megatron's midsection and thrust his fingers forward looking for anything he could-

Megatron grabbed his wrists, both of them and held him up by them, untangling the grappler somewhere along the process.

Optimus struggled for a moment but eventually relented, slumping in the Warlord's grasp, "You win. Let me down."

"On the contrary, little Prime," A new tone had entered the large grey mech's voice, Optimus couldn't quite identify it, "This is the first time you haven't completely been repulsed by my touch. I plan to take advantage of it."

And then suddenly they were moving, Optimus still dangling in his grasp, "I'm almost saddened it ended so quickly, how I love to make the strong fall."

Okay, now Optimus was worried. It didn't help when he was being pinned against the wall of some random factory in the Detroit street, harshly held up by one of the Warlord's large servos. The other, interestingly enough started moving its way across his plating, taking small moments to squeeze the tips of his claws into any seam he could find.

It took Optimus a moment to realize what was happening. His voice betrayed him coming out hoarse, "Was this a sort of foreplay for you?"

"In a sense mighty Prime," Megatron chuckled above him, "I was told you're kind are very amicable to the idea of casual interface."

Optimus only nodded, discarding the 'your kind' aspect of the comment. How long has it been since he relaxed enough to do this with someone? The first loop? When he was grieving Prowl's first death? Had it really been over 300 years? How ridiculous, and now he was simply melting, oh- there. Yes there. The larger mech finally drew a claw down to his interface array, tapping it lightly.

"Open Prime," Megatron growled out, "open now while I'm feeling kind."

Optimus hesitated then, but only for a moment as the digit started digging into the panel seam. He could feel the heat pooling off him both, he could feel himself already lubricating.

He didn't open though instead snarking back, "What? Going to rip it off? Good luck explaining that one to ratchet." finally he had found his voice again, and it had come out a lot stronger than he had expected.

"If I must, though you don't seem to be opposed to the idea of interfacing," Megatron drawled but removed the digit, dragging it back up his chassis. "if I must I shall hold you down and simply take you I will."

Another wave of heat pooled off of him.

"Is that what you want? You want the Warlord to hold you down and force a charge onto you? What a pervert you are, more than other Autobots it seems."

Megatron continued tracing aspects of his plating. Optimus lost himself in the teasing touch. He had never known Megatron to be so delicate with him, with *anything* really. But here he was, melting into only a touch only the thought of interfacing and-

Megatron sharp digit passed over a raise in his armor on his side, the warlord stopped over it, placing a hand down, holding Optimus' chassis.

The raise was- Optimus froze. He had forgotten. This was *Megatron*. Warlord. Killer of millions-billions. Tyrant. Murder, his Murder.

Megatron's hand sat quite contently on top of one of the scars left by his sword. Unknowingly caressing the reminder of Optimus' murder.

Optimus couldn't vent.

In a moment of panic- of realization Optimus sputtered out something impossible to understand. His hand were still pinned above him, holding him above the ground and against the factory wall. With them useless he turned to any part of him that was free.

This ended up being his pedes.

He brought both of them up between him and the warlord, and then pushed out against Megatron's chest plating. The shock was enough to get Megatron to drop him but wouldn't leave any real damage other than possibly a small dent.

Megatron growled; a deep threatening tone that rumbled through the air.

Optimus reacted before thinking. He turned and brought himself into a defensive stance.

He needed to find the hammer. The Magnus Hammer.

Where did he leave it? It was his only chance, where would he have... why couldn't he think straight? Why couldn't he remember?

He was armed still though? He had an axe, at least he thought he did, he couldn't focus enough to remember where-

"OPTIMUS!" Megatron shouted into his face, arms stretched out as if to shake his shoulders, but far enough away to signal his understanding of his understanding of Optimus' aversion to touch.

Optimus brought his own arms out of the defensive position he was in and held them against his chassis, rubbing one of his scars in the process.

Megatron stood awkwardly in front of him, arms slowly pulling back to his sides, "are you... alright?"

"Fine," Optimus shot back a little more aggressively than intended, "I'm fine Megatron. We shouldn't be doing this in public anyways."

"Oh no," Megatron growled again, "This one doesn't get brushed off Prime."

Optimus let out a low growl himself, "I said I'm fine *my Lord*, " he spat.

Megatron straightened himself as is offended and glared. The heat that had been between them completely gone. "At least tell me you're over the incident with the yellow one, I would hate for this show to be all for waste." Megatron deadpanned.

“This show?!” Optimus spat, “so what? This was all some elaborate plan to get me to play nice again?!” Optimus fumed.

“Please,” Megatron said, turning his shoulder towards Optimus and huffing, “as if I’d actually lower myself to fragging a Prime because i was genuinely attracted to him.”

Optimus gritted his dental plates and clenched his fists. He gritted out, “And here I thought we may actually be getting to know each other!”

Fine. If that's how Megatron wanted to play it...

“As if I would need to actually *know* one of you sparklings! Had it not been you I would have simply had the constructicons build me a space bridge! You’re simply an annoying convenience!” Megatron showed his sharpened dental plates as he snarled.

“Fine,” Optimus gave in, dropping his aggressive stance before turning away from the warlord and slumping into a walking pace.

“Don’t forget your branding is tomorrow Autobot!” Megatron called after him.

Oh. He wouldn't forget.

Chapter End Notes

Oh my goodness you do not know the trouble i had with this chapter holy moley.

also mu first time trying some more sexual stuff. Hope you liked it even if it didn't go too far.

Head cannon for this fic- Megatron's got a huge kink for taking down people stronger than him. Optimus carrying around a weapon of mass destruction? You know that's gonna be in smut later on. it has to be.

Poor OP. So close to a bit of relaxation and then your anxiety kicks in... :(

Next time!

Prowl goes to a bar. Not to drink though.

Please comment!

Tall, Dark and Brooding

Chapter Summary

Prowl faces some hard truths.

Blitzwing's a pretty good boyfriend.

Optimus gets a few minutes of relaxation. He needs it.

Chapter Notes

Shout out to Archivar-orion-pax on Tumblr who compiled a list of different cannon cybertronian substances, some of which appear in this chapter.

I'm back!!! Again!!!

This isn't edited!!

Sorry!!!

Also posted again from my phone because I got a new computer and UGH it's spent the last 2 hours updating and I'm tired of waiting.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The briefing on the mission had been brief. But Prowl somewhat assumed 'brief' was in the name so it kinda made sense. Jazz had run the meeting of course, it was his operation after all. There were two other enforcers there, mechs who were helping out with the raid but Prowl didn't really learn their designations.

The mission was a raid, internal too. Someone had been smuggling high grade into Iacon. Intelligence reports Prowl had access to detailed the covert operation being discovered by Rodimus Prime a few weeks back. Records of the Prime's detailing of the smuggling operation were hard to decipher at best. If Prowl wasn't mistaken he would have guessed Rodimus had had some high grade himself before reporting it.

Prowl understood why high grade was illegal. It was a wasteful use of resources and often lead to violence and impulsivity. It made logical sense. So did the cerfews if he really thought about it. Who needed to be out that late anyways? A lot of mecha apparently, Getaway had been bringing up riots quite a lot at work recently. Prowl was just happy they weren't his job.

Jazz had walked out with him from the meeting, talking excitedly of Prowl's part on this, mainly observation and paperwork, but also mentioned looking into interrogation later on. Jazz was excited, in turn Prowl hoped it went well for him. Maybe they would interface after if everything went well.

They hadn't interfaced yet. Well, Prowl hadn't really interfaced with anyone really. But that was kinda his own choice, his training squad had offered it but he had declined. To be honest really Jazz had been the only one he wanted to interface with. And now... well he had been on Cybertron for a while now, enough to be trusted on a mission and Jazz hadn't said anything about it. To be honest Prowl was somewhat offended, and also to nervous to ask himself.

Well, he really shouldn't focus on that. He had a job to do.

A job that maybe, if he did well a certain white Cyber-ninja would interface with him.

Goodness, where had this sudden attraction come from? He supposed it had been there for a while now, they had been getting lunch together on a regular basis- an activity done frequently between mechs fragging each other. Well, at least Blur and Longarm get lunch together all the time, and everyone knew they were fragging.

"Earth ta Prowler!" Prowl snapped out of his daze only to have Jazz's hand wave in front of his face. The white mech walked beside him out of the meeting and apparently Prowl had zoned out again.

"I'm listening," Prowl responded, turning to Jazz and attempting to look a bit more interested.

"No ya aren't!" Jazz accused, half chuckling, "It's cool Prowler, I've been a bit excited about this whole thing."

"I am too," Prowl smiled, over to the white mech.

"Good," Jazz said, smiling back at him, "we're meeting up again later for prep work, see ya then!"

They were ready.

They were in position waiting for Jazz's signal and ready.

The two enforcers Jazz had met earlier were positioned by the door, blasters set heavily in their servos. A few other mechs had joined them and now stood outside with them. Silence reigned until Jazz gave his signal.

So they waited.

Prowl had settled himself into a shadow cast spot in the alley leading up to the entrance of the raid destination. They were out past curfew, in the dark of Cybertron's night cycle. The alley was dingy, dirty almost; an uncommon sight this close to Metroplex. Jazz had stood himself beside Prowl slightly more in the light, his own blaster raised and pointed at the door.

Prowl questioned how smuggling got this close to Metroplex anyways. He would have to ask the smuggler.

A soft breeze passed through the alley, an odd feeling for Cybertron, a familiar one for Prowl.

Jazz gave the signal.

There was a rush of clanging metal as the two mech's by the door burst through it. Jazz entered after them followed by the several other enforcers. Prowl entered last, ninja stars drawn.

The interior wasn't at all as Prowl expected it to be. He had expected dark and warehouse like. He had expected them to face off against scary, Decepticon looking mechs huddled over some illegal brewing machinery dark and dingy the operation would begin and blasters would immediately go off, there would be a fight, but they would come out victorious in the end. Jazz would be promoted. Prowl and him would go back to their lunch routine. Earth would be behind him.

That's not what happened.

The room the entered wasn't dark, instead illuminated by soft warm lighting. What Prowl had expected to be a dingy warehouse turned up being... well a bar. The layout was simple. Padded booths and tables lined the walls, the floor was metal tiled, reflecting the lights. there bar along the left wall, stools sat up against it and different coloured high grade sat on the shelves behind it.

The mechs too weren't as Prowl had expected. Normal mecha sat sparsely in chairs around the bar, now half standing surprised at the noisy intrusion. A mini bot stood behind the bar, he too was caught off guard dropping a glass in the process.

Prowl immediately dropped the weapons he was carrying back into his subspace. Jazz made his way towards the counter while the enforcers split up between the patrons, blasters still held high. This was excessive.

Stasis cuffs came next, a series of smacks followed by soft electrical buzzing sounded throughout the bar.

Only then did Prowl realize he was stood frozen in the door. Forcing himself to move Prowl made his way towards the bar. His joints seemed awkwardly stiff as he approached Jazz.

The bartender Jazz had bent over the counter was pretty small. His white and red plating seemed vaguely like a medic's paint job but Prowl couldn't see any medic markings on him.

"This is a violation of my rights!" the minibot yelled, struggling under Jazz's grasp.

Jazz had his weight pushed on the civilian forcing him face down onto the bar, "Well ya gave them up when you started smugglin' high grade."

Prowl made his way behind Jazz and behind the bar, avoiding participating in the chaos of the arrests. "Betelgeux whiskey, Engex, Nightmare fuel, old corroder..." Prowl read out the labels on several jars lining the back of the bar, most of them he had never heard of.

"I bet you could use some old corroder!" The mech under Jazz laughed, "loosen you hard-afts right

up!”

There was another metallic clanging noise followed by a soft hum and Prowl turned to see Jazz had finally got the stasis cuffs on the bartender.

“Your designation...?” Prowl asked, still unsure exactly how to act. He assumed asking questions would be right.

“Swerve!” The mech snapped at him, “Swerve! You’re in Swerve’s! If you didn’t come in here guns a’blazing you might have read a sign or two!”

Prowl looked along the walls for a moment. And yes, the Swerve’s word there was a crudely painted ‘Swerve’s’ banner along the far wall.

“I- um...”

“Don’t let ‘em rattle you Prowler. They all got a mouth on ‘em when they know they’re headed to the stockades.” Jazz said. There was an odd tone to his voice when he talked about the stockades.

Everyone did when they talked about that ‘hell hole’, as Blur liked to call it. Prowl had never been there, never seen it’s effects but he had heard stories. Apparently mechs never came out the same.

Prowl’s main concern was the fact it was a *military* prison. Not a *civilian* prison.

“The stockades? No trial? They’re a little extreme for a smuggling offense.”

Jazz leaned himself back and away from Swerve. In an odd motion Jazz brought his hand over the elite guard symbol on his chest. To Prowl it was obvious when he faked a chuckle and said, “Not when the Decepticons are right back on our borders. You really need to read those memos Ultra Magnus sends out about law changes.”

Prowl decided, with so many enforcers in the room, he wouldn’t question it.

The enforcers had quieted down now, most mechs were in stasis cuffs and being moved out of the building.

Several enforcers looked to Jazz occasionally and Jazz only responded back with hand signals.

Prowl looked to Jazz and Jazz stared back at him.

Prowl awkwardly cleared his vocalizer.

“Good job Jazz Minor. On the successful raid,” Prowl managed to force out. Why was her nervous suddenly? The raid was over, Prowl didn’t even really participate...

“Than you, agent Prowl,” Jazz looked over and offered a small smile back, “Now I’d like to keep you here but you and I both got a lot of paperwork to get through.”

“There wouldn’t be any paperwork if you didn’t ruin my bar!” Swerve chimed in again in front of them.

Prowl tried not to think too hard about what would happen to Swerve in prison as Prowl was debriefed and allowed to head home.

“How was it?” Getaway asked him from across the lunch table the next day.

Prowl looked down and swished the energon in his cube around. He took a secretive glance at Jazz beside before saying, “Eventful. Though I think I prefer desk work for now.”

“Oh come on!” Cliffjumper chimed in from beside Getaway, “There’s no way it was any worse than sitting at a desk all day.”

Prowl frowned, “Unlike all of you, I got my share of action on earth going against a crazy Prime. So desk work suits me fine.”

“Maybe you’re the crazy one,” Getaway sighed before chugging the rest of his cube, “You should have let me take the job, I told you.”

Blur perked up for a moment, warning the table of an incoming rant, “Ohhhhhh, speaking of earth since Prowl brought up the topic seems like I drew the lucky straw this time around! I meant to mention it to Prowl but seeing he was so busy with the whole raid thing, yes I saw the files, I thought I should wait until after to bring it up-”

“Blur, would you *please* spit it out already speedy speaker,” Cliffjumper huffed, crossing his arms.

“Well maybe I would Cliffjumper if some-bot would let me speak *without* bringing up my glitch everytime I speak. You know that's quite rude bringing it up-”

“Blur!” this time it was Prowl to interrupt, “Please, can we focus on earth?”

Blur looked to him, offering a odd look before talking, “I’m going on a recon mission to earth.”

Prowl felt his spark sink, “They’re sending you to earth?”

“I’ve been given strict orders to not make contact with Optimus or your crew. Mostly its just to confirm your counts of Blitzwing and Lugnut in the area and retrieve the Magnus Hammer if possible. I’m really not supposed to talk about this but I thought you should know given your past with them.” Blur finally finished, taking a swift sip of his energon immediately after.

Prowl took a moment to process. They were finally going after Optimus. They were finally sending someone to earth. Someone who was likely going to die. Would they go after Bumblebee and Bulkhead too? They were technically traitors...

“You won’t get the hammer from him,” to his surprise it was Jazz beside him that spoke first.

“You’re telling me some rouge Prime, a Prime mind you that was a spacebridge technician stands a chance against the fastest mech around?” Getaway laughed, looking to Jazz and Prowl. When neither of them said a word he frowned.

“I watched Optimus take on both Lugnut and Blitzwing, and come out of the situation without a scratch on him, before he had the Magnus Hammer,” Prowl offered up, staring intently into his own energon.

“Optimus took down both Sentinel and Ultra Magnus on earth,” Jazz sighed.

“Like I said,” Blur started talking, “Recon! Information only! I just wanted to mention it because Longarm said you might be offended or-”

“Offended?” Prowl questioned, “Why would i be offended?”

“Well it’s just Longarm asked me to take on this mission and not you even though you likely know the terrain and your Cyber-ninja training would allow you to better stay hidden.” Blur cut himself off there, somewhat quieting down.

“I don’t *want* to go back to earth Blur. I’m glad they’re sending someone else. Trust me.” Prowl chugged the last of his energon, and stood. Uncomfortable with the situation he took a step away from the table, “I’m going to get back to work.”

Prowl turned and headed towards the exit of the cafeteria. Behind him, quietly Getaway spoke when he thought Prowl couldn't hear, “Great Blur, you upset ‘tall dark and brooding’ over there.”

Prowl ignored it.

“-ould you two lazy afts wake up?!” a shrill voice woke Bee up. He was dazed, with Decepticon signals all around him. There was one exceedingly close- *to close*. He engaged his wheels, his processor still foggy, and they caught on a hard metal below him, shooting him away from the Decepticon signal. There was another yell, this one deeper right before Bumblebee hit the wall.

His optics finally caught up to his surroundings. Starscream stood in the door, casually draped on the doorway, leaning on it's frame, a curious look on his face. His attention turned to the Decepticon signal underneath him. Blitzwing stared at him, angry faceplates growling at him. Several skid marks lined his chest.

“Uh... sorry?” Bumblebee offered, shrugging.

Starscream rolled his optics, “Hurry up and get to the deck, its only been a bit but we’re back.”

“Back where?” Bumblebee questioned, standing up and rubbing his helm.

Starscream turned flicking a wing in annoyance, “The ship we spotted. Now hurry up,” He growled and left the room.

Click-whir. Blitzwing sat up, now calm and stoic.

As Blitzwing sat up and stretched Bumblebee ran through memory files of the previous cycle just to make sure that yes, him and Blitzwing were now ‘together’. What that exactly meant Bee didn’t really know. They hadn’t interfaced or anything, which confused Bumblebee (he made a mental note to try and get between Blitzwing’s leg struts again) but having the triple changer at least cuddle him was a start he thought he liked.

“Remind me never to scare jou awake,” Blitzwing looked at him, slightly glaring.

“Sorry, it’s just starscream’s voice is just *that* obnoxious,”Bumblebee laughed, “It doesn’t help waking up that close to a haha... a um...”

A moment of realization crossed Blitzwing’s face and he looked up and away for a moment.

“Recharge on your stomach then,” Blitzwing looked back down to him, “So that your wheels don’t catch anything when you jolt avake zen.”

Bumblebee blinked a few times and Blitzwing simply laid a hand on his helm.

“Ve should get going Bumblebot.”

When Blitzwing finally stood and began walking to the deck Bumblebee speed walked to keep to his side.

“Glad you two have decided to join me,” Starscream motioned out the window, “There’s your stupid ship. I’ve been trying to hail it for a for clicks but bit not responding. Can we go now?”

Bumblebee scowled. He jogged forward and climbed up onto Blitzwing's deck chair, stood, and turned on the console, “Yeah but it’s still emitting a distress signal.”

Click-whir. “Ve vouldn’t vant captain who went back on their vord! Ha!” Random cackled, coming to stand behind Bumblebee.

“Blitzwing’s got a point Screamer,” Bee smirked still leaned over the console.

Starscream scoffed but leaned over his own console and changed their course towards the floating ship.

“I hope it's a ship full of cosmic rust,” Starscream crossed his arms and focused on this ship ahead of them, “Then I can send you both in and be done with you.”

Blitzwing slid over to him and in his random persona hugged the seeker giggling to himself, “Jou know you love us!”

Starscream rolled his optics again.

“You’re painting yourself again?” Ratchet entered Optimus’ room in the factory, motioning to the paint can he had set beside him.

Optimus picked up the small human paintbrush and sat himself on his berth. “I just want my scars covered again, is that a crime?” Optimus said.

“It is when it’s 4 am and I have yet to see you recharge in several days,” Ratchet motioned to him.

“I get a few hours here and there,” Optimus responded. He opened the can and dipped the brush in and brought it up to his chassis.

“Need help?” Ratchet asked reaching for the brush. Optimus let him take it and leaned back allowing Ratchet access to his frame.

Optimus sighed when Ratchet's steady hands started brushing over the scratches in his paint.

“Alright, you going to tell me what happened?” Ratchet asked, not looking up from his work.

“What?” Optimus questioned, “How could you tell? You just walked in!”

“Please,” Ratchet glared up at him, “You haven’t painted yourself in weeks. But here you are, back to the paint bucket.”

Optimus sighed and looked away. Deciding to omit his meeting with Megatron he went for a half truth, "My branding is today. Excuse me for caring about appearances."

"That's the issue kid. You don't care that much about your appearance. Not in the vain way. Though..." Ratchet paused, delicately dragging the brush over one of the delicate scars, "I'm no psychologist but I wouldn't put it past you trying to look tough for Megatron during your branding."

Optimus stayed silent.

"Well I don't blame you," Ratchet continued to add, "You look like slag."

"Is it that bad?" Optimus sadly chuckled.

"Well buffing your finish from time to time or maybe recharging for more than an hour or two at a time would go a long way." Ratchet smiled as he continued to apply paint. "As you physician I'm inclined to make you take a break for your health."

"You know I can't," Optimus focused on a crack in the wall behind Ratchet, effectively avoiding the medic's gaze.

"No," Ratchet took an authoritative tone, "You won't because you think you need to save the world."

"Because I do," Optimus looked down and stared Ratchet in the optics, "It's been three hundred years Ratchet and I'm the only one who even knows it happening."

"After the branding you're taking time off," Ratchet deadpanned to him. He had stopped painting and held Optimus' gaze.

"You're not going to let this go are you?" Optimus groaned, laying his head back.

"Not a chance," Ratchet said, going back to steadily repairing Optimus' paint job. Optimus could hear the smirk in his voice.

"Fine. But only a day. And only if you convince Megatron," Optimus groaned out. He closed his optics and tried to focus on Ratchet's soft and careful touches.

"That old mech? Not a problem," Ratchet said.

"Oh!" Optimus reopened his optics and sat up, forcing Ratchet to move from his place painting Optimus' chest.

When Ratchet gave him a confused look Optimus reached into his subspace and dug around for a moment, scolding himself for forgetting. After a moment of digging he pulled out the EMP generator and held it out to Ratchet.

Ratchet's optics went wide and he slowly took the medical tool from Optimus' servos and began inspecting it.

"You... Lockdown..." Ratchet stumbled over his words.

"I would think you would learn not to ask questions by now," Optimus smiled softly.

"Thank you," the grumpy mech smiled and it made the entire fight with Megatron worth it.

Optimus laid back down and closed his Optics, “You can repay me by finishing my paint job. It’s oddly relaxing.”

After a moment, Optimus felt Ratchet's steady hands return to him.

He focused on the skilled hands on his chassis, and tried his best to forget the branding planned for later that day.

Chapter End Notes

I give in. I give in. I really need someone to beta this. Or someone to groan at when I'm trying to get through the parts I don't like.

Thank you all again for the lovely comments. They give me so much motivation.

Next Time!

Prowl continues his road of discovery.

The crew of the Tyrant Userper gets bigger.

Optimus takes the Decepticon brand.

Branding and Bitching

Chapter Summary

Optimus takes the Decepticon brand.

Bumblebee and co. run into others.

Prowl reads

Chapter Notes

Hey! I'm so sorry this is super late! I kinda got lazy with writing and such But it's here!
And about 1000 words longer than usual!

Special thanks and credit to primus-why(fuzzybonnet) for being the best beta ever and helping me really improve the quality of all this. You're the best!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Detroit was usually cool this time of year, yet the familiar weather could only offer so much comfort. In the brisk morning a small layer of fog had settled into the cavern floor, only disrupted by Optimus', Ratchet's and Bulkhead's steady approach into the cave. The large opening on the roof of the cavern let in a touch of natural morning light but was partially obscured by the half-constructed spacebridge casting a shadow over the open space.

He locked eyes with Megatron as he approached. He had expected Megatron to be waiting for him here, bright and early right at the start of his shift.

They held each other's gaze. Optimus made note of Lugnut's position to the left and slightly behind Megatron. It was Megatron's juggernaut who held the brand in his claw-like servos. Blackarachnia stood to his right, also slightly behind the warlord. She stared at him, as if asking silent questions. It was all too familiar as Elita-1 often held that expression when Sentinel was about to do something stupid.

Was this stupid?

The obvious answer was yes. It was incredibly stupid. This branding was a means to control him. Megatron must have known the creed he was about to recite was going to be all false. Megatron had made it blatantly clear Optimus was a tool to him; something to be used and controlled. Megatron assumed Optimus couldn't deal with the Decepticon Justice Division, and in a sense he was right. Having them on the front lines meant that if Optimus turned on Megatron he would be instantly killed. There was no possible way he could take on that many mechs -- Magnus Hammer

or not.

So yes this *was stupid* . Taking this brand was meant to give Megatron false security , but it was actually giving him real security. Taking this brand meant that Optimus was completely relying on closing the Spacebridge Nexus almost immediately when arriving on Cybertron. If he couldn't close it quick enough to prevent the DJD from appearing , it was all over.

If he was going to take this brand he needed to adjust his plan. But Optimus wasn't an idiot- stupid maybe. stupid enough to take a Decepticon brand. But there was a back-up plan already in motion. And thanks to Megatron's help the previous night with Yoketron's helm he may have just the right amount of leverage to pull it off. Megatron was pushing him into a corner, except the room Optimus had made was circular. So let the branding happen. Let Megatron, the slag eating tyrant that he is, have his fun.

Optimus stopped in front of the warlord, Magnus Hammer safely secured at his side and at the ready. A show of force, demonstrating that he would not submit. Was the non-verbal threat a risk? Yes, but after the way Megatron had treated him, Optimus found it hard not to enjoy it.

He handed the hammer to Ratchet on his right, who took it easily.

"You painted yourself," Megatron deadpanned.

Optimus sighed, "You were staring yesterday. I assumed you had issues with it." Not a total lie. Megatron had been staring at his chassis but the paint was more of a statement, well that and to hid his scars a bit better. Megatron must at least know about them by now but Optimus wasn't about to put them out on display.

Without prompting Optimus dropped to a knee.

"I half expected you to run . " Megatron said, turning around to take the brand from Lugnut.

Optimus looked up at him and raised an optical ridge, "Me? Is that the coward you take me for?"

Megatron took the brand, weighted it in his hands and inspected it. "This is a great honour and responsibility Prime." he said, "I hope you'll take this seriously." He said.

Optimus blinked a few times before responding, "I'm not an idiot Megatron. I know exactly what I'm doing."

"Enough of the snark , Prime. It's very unbecoming of you to be so petty," Megatron scolded .

You're one to talk about being petty. "I have to get it out now before you can punish me for it," Optimus retorted, keeping his head high despite his kneeling position .

Megatron activated the brand. The end, shaped like the Decepticon sigil , sparked and shifted to a purple hue. An intimidating sight, but O p timus supposed that's what the Decepticons were all about. Fear and intimidation ebbed off their very frames, brutality their signature -- especially for the higher-ups in their ranks. The were the mechs who had killed millions. They had caused the war , if you were to believe the Autobots ; Optimus didn't know if he did. But then again he never spent too much time thinking about those topics in recent loops. The Decepticons were aggressive, conniving, relied on gruesome tactics to get what they wanted. And n ow , O p timus was becoming one of them *again* .

He had been a Decepticon before, each time he had died it had been a Decepticon loop. Optimus didn't think about those loops often; He never really liked them. In fact he was sure he hated them.

“Repeat after me,” Megatron started to say, but before he could respond Optimus chimed in.

“I pledge my unquestioning loyalty to Megatron and the Decepticon cause. I shall devote my spark to achieving our goal of a Decepticon controlled Cybertron, by any means necessary. And annihilate all who have driven us from our rightful homeworld. Surrender is not an option.” The words fell easily off his tongue. It was just another smooth lie-- one that would piss off Megatron because the oath had been a secret for centuries.

The mechs around him stayed silent for a moment. Megatron glared at him in annoyed confusion. Optimus thought he quite liked that look on him.

Without another word Megatron thrust the branding rod to his upper chassis, between his windshields. The pain was hot, he could feel the metal of his plating bend and melt against the logo as it seared into him. Optimus clenched and engaged every piston he could in his body in order to prevent himself from screaming. He could feel the intrusive coding working its way past his firewalls and into some of his more basic coding. At least he was expecting this pain ; at least he had prepared for it.

And just like that the heat was gone. His chassis still ached and he was suddenly tired -- so tired. Optimus caught himself as he slumped forward, supporting his weight on his weak arms. His fans were on overdrive, attempting to cool the heat radiating from the branding point. It took him a moment to stop the frantic circulation.

“Rise loyal Decepticon,” Megatron’s cool and collected voice came from above him.

Optimus managed to make it to his feet. His circuits felt painfully over - stimulated and every movement only agitated them further . When he could finally stand upright without fear of tipping over, he unshuttered his optics. The new sensory input agitated his new optics and he fought the urge to rub them. Once again, his LEDs switched over to the recognizable bright Decepticon red , but it didn't make it anymore pleasant.

Ratchet handed the hammer back to him as Optimus stood straight and returned his gaze back to Megatron.

“Your optics look good in red . ” Megatron remarked, giving the branding rod back to Lugnut.

Optimus shrugged. He hated having red optics, but if he was to pull this off it came with the territory. “Will that be all Lord Megatron?”

Megatron seemed slightly taken aback. Optimus couldn't tell if it was the question or the fact Optimus called him ‘Lord’ in a non - spiteful tone.

“No, that shall be all,” Megatron paused as if unsure what to call Optimus now but settled on, “ ... That shall be all , Prime.”

Great. Still calling him by that stupid military title.

Megatron turned and went around him, flanked by Lugnut and Blackarachnia.

They made it halfway across the worksite before Optimus spoke up again, “You’re forgetting something *my Liege* ,” Optimus turned then, pulling the microchip from the previous night out of his subspace and held it up for Megatron to recognize.

Optimus watched as Megatron approached again, this time setting a more aggressive pace. When he made it back to the smaller mech , the warlord pulled the chip from Optimus ’ digits and

immediately handed it to Blackaracnia.

“Replicate this,” was all he said before finally leaving the worksite.

The fog of the early morning had finally lifted, leaving the three mechs to themselves.

“You alright Optimus?” Bulkhead questioned first, looking to Optimus with concern.

Optimus offered a reassuring smile, “I’m fine. My circuits are kinda running hot but I’m fine , thank you.”

Ratchet huffed and crossed his arms, “That fragger,” he said, referring to megatron, “What an absolute showy Bastard.”

Bulkhead looked to Ratchet , confused, “A human swear?” he asked.

Ratchet crossed his arms, “I’m learning them. They’ve got a better variety than C ybertronian swear s and sometimes you gotta swear in *just the right way* . Especially when it comes to Megatron. The Bastard.”

Optimus felt a chuckle rise in his chest. At least he could still rely on his team to have his back. It beat going through this alone , as he usually did.

“Whatever goes wrong I blame it on you two,” Starscream groaned out as he finished locking up the space walk to the other ship ’ s receiving bay.

Blitzwing stood over Bumblebee in the walk (a rectangular hall that now connected the two ships, it was the first time Bumblebee had seen one). Bumblebee peeked past his legs, not really paying attention to what the larger mech was saying to him.

“Listen Bumblebee!” Hothead yelled, bringing the decepticon back to his focus.

“I’m listening! I’m listening!” Bee griped, continuing to try and look past Blitzwing at Starscream , who was waiting to open the receiving bay doors.

“I’m serious little bug!” He continued to yell.

“I’m not a bug!” Bee finally snapped his helm to face the Decepticon in front of him. the Decepticon in front of him.

Click-whir. “Jou are to me!” Blitzwing's random persona cackled at him.

“Fine Blitz-butt,” Bee rolled his optics, “You have my attention.”

Click-whir. Blitzwing swapped to his calm, blue faceplates before speaking, “Jou stay behind me. Jou don't fight if zey get aggressive, jou run back to our ship and lock ze doors. If zey are Autobots, jou don’t talk to zem. If zey are Decepticons jou don’t talk at all.”

“I handled myself with Strika and Rodimus’ crews , didn't I?” Bumblebee put his hands on his hips for emphasis, leaning forward slightly.

Blitzwing paused and looked over his shoulder to Starscream , who tapped his pede impatiently on the space-walk floor. Blitzwing nodded--, a swift curt motion Bee might have missed had he not been paying attention. Blitzwing turned to face the door as Starscream hit the switch.

There was a flurry of motion as the door opened. The *thing*, apparently waiting on the other side of the door, burst through at it's first opportunity. The mass of grey metal (larger than both Starscream and Blitzwing) reached out a large limb immediately striking the closest mech to him which happened to be Starscream, who had no chance to move away from the door he had opened. Starscream fell to the floor with a metal-on-metal *clash*, and Bee could see where a dent had formed on the seeker's helm.

At least this gave Blitzwing a moment to lower his cannons and fire one shot. The air in the space walk became frigid as a round of ice collided with the grey mass. The mass (which Bumblebee finally recognized as another mech) only slowed slightly , as a galcial coating formed over his chassis. The mech charged again, this time aiming for Blitzwing and Bumblebee.

Bee engaged his stingers just before the agressor reached them. The mech swung another arm, this time knocking Blitzwing's helm and wing into the wall. Bumblebee jolt ed back for a moment, moving into formation to prepare for the mech's inevitable attack.

However the mech stopped, looking down at Bumblebee. The ice on the large mech 's armor was slowly melting into pools by their pedes .

Bee decided now was as good a time as any. he raised his stingers and shot, taking a step forward in the process. Electricity crackled over the larger mech's plating , but it seemed to have no effect.

The mech was huge -- a massive hulk of pure a massive hulk of pure warframe build, with battle-ready metal that Bumblebee had no choice but to face alone. With him standing this close , Bumblebee could really get a look at his foe. His optics glowed a soft yellow Bee hadn't seen on another mech. Bumblebee expected him to lash out or try to squish him. Yet it didn't move. Instead it looked him over, Optics settling on his injured leg.

“You’re a prisoner,” the warframe stated as if making that decision for himself. He turned and looked back from the ship he had just come from before yelling, “NOVA!”

Immediately a small mech (okay well small compared to the *death machine* in front of him) peeked his head around the entrance of the stranded ship. The bright yellow and orange mech took a moment to assess the state of the space walk before steppint onto the walk. He was a heavier set autobot (though Bumblebee couldn't see any badge on him) like Optimus, maybe slightly smaller. There also was an odd section of his chassis that just looked wrong, though Bumblebee couldn't explain why. The mech, er... *Nova* hopped onto , then off of Starscream as he approached.

“What’s the issueeeeeeeee...oh?,” Nova remarked as he came around Megazarak to look at Bee. “It’s an... Autobot? With Starscream and Blitzwing?”

Megazarak suddenly looked quite confused, turning back to look at the two mech he had effectively steam-rolled through. “That was Starscream?” He asked.

“And Blitzwing!” Bumblebee piped up, still holding his stingers up defensively, “Get off our ship!”

But the two mechs didn't seem to hear him, disregarding him for their own conversation.

“This is bad,” the smaller of the two threw his hands up and brought them to the sides of his helm,

tugging on some detailing nervously and almost yelled, “This is really, *really* bad. This was supposed to just be a simple raid...”

“You worry too much,” Megazarak crossed his arms and leaned back, “What, you think Megatron’s going to start hunting me down because of a squabble?”

“Yes!” Nova threw his arms into the air this time, “Because you just attacked his second in command, *Yes* !”

“It’s *Starscream*, ” The war machine emphasized , motioning to the downed seeker, “Megatron would thank me if he were to die.”

“And what if he sees it as violating the terms of your banishment! Even if this is neutral space! We’re right on an Autobot border! What will Megatron think!?” Nova continued to rant.

“HEY!” Bumblebee finally yelled, “Did you forget about me? Seriously? Awesome yellow bot you two somehow forgot about!”

Bumblebee immediately regretted pointing himself out though as both mechs turned to him. While Megazarak’s gaze was dark and menacing as it fell on Bee, Nova’s gaze seemed more concerned.

“You’re injured!” Nova exclaimed, running forward and looking down to Bumblebee’s leg. “And patched? I assumed you were...”

“A prisoner?” Bumblebee scoffed, “to those two idiots? No way!”

Nova took a step back and briefly looked to Megazarak. The war mech let out a huff before reaching for Bumblebee.

Bumblebee immediately darted out of the way of the grasping hand and shot his stingers once again. But same as before, Megazarak didn’t move, and the electricity dissipated over his plating. As the mech continued to grab at him Bumblebee tossed his weight in the opposite direction. Apparently Megazarak had been expecting this, and quicker than Bee could react , lashed out with his opposite hand, seizing Bee by his waist and holding on firmly.

Bumblebee yelled.

Okay, well maybe *screamed* , but he wasn’t about to admit that out loud.

Suddenly, there was a feral hiss from the floor. For a brief moment Bumblebee thought that maybe the space walk had disengaged , but he didn't feel like he was moving.

Before Bee could actually register what the hiss was both him and Megazarak were thrown to the ground. With the war mech’s hand wrapped around him Bee managed to look up , only to be greeted by black faceplates.

Blitzwing emitted another angry hiss before pouncing forward and attempting to wrestle Bumblebee out of the war machine’s grasp. Blitzwing grabbed Bee slightly below where Megazarak had him and began tugging, hoisting both mech back to standing in the process . Bumblebee felt like a child’s toy as he was tugged between the two. When the tug of war became too violent the hissing mech who held his lower half let up slightly.

“Careful , bolts for brains!” Bumblebee yelled. Blitzwing hissed once again. There was another metal-on-metal noise and suddenly they were turning; a jarring, nauseating movement that almost made the small yellow mech purge his tanks.

“Now!” Blitzwing shrieked , confusing Bee for a split moment before all three of them jolted.

Megazarak let out a low yell. Whatever Blitzwing had done forced Megazarak to loosen his grip, finally allowing Blitzwing to pull Bumblebee away from the war machine.

Megazarak turned and Bee could finally see what happened. Starscream stood, his chassis heavily dented but his nullrays were engaged , and Megazarak had an obvious black mark on his back.

Bumblebee's processor stalled when he was suddenly and violently moving again. Blitzwing had thrown him, as it would eventually register to him, back into their own ship. He scrambled for a moment , trying to run back onto the space walk , but for a brief moment Blitzwing had stood in the doorway and offered a small smile.

Then Blitzwing slammed his hand down, shutting the door and cutting Bee off from the fight.

Immediately the small yellow mech clambered to his feet to run back towards the space walk. He pounded on the door as the noises became more and more violent on the other side. Bee glanced to the side, running over to the access pannel by the door and punched the code to open the door.

It didn't budge. The mechanisms must have been broken on the other side.

“Blitzwing!” He yelled. Panicked and upset he continued, “Blitzwing open the door!”

A sudden pain filled him and Bumblebee looked down to his injured leg. The mesh had been torn off, leaving his wiring and tubing exposed. Somewhere in there he was leaking energon again , seemingly worse than last time.

He threw himself against the door in frustration, hoping *something, anything* would happen.

There was a noise behind him.

Bumblebee flipped around, now gazing down the hallway of the Tyrant Usurper. A scraping followed by a small clicking noise occurred again. Unlike the definite sounds of battle behind him this noise came from the engine room slightly to his left.

Bumblebee tried to stay silent as he moved to the engine room , but his leg made it difficult. Even with the area so close he had resorted to limping there, his leg now throbbing with each movement.

He reached the door and leaned himself onto it, taking a vent as he opened it.

As light entered the tight engine room Bee could make out the bright orange plating of the mech in front of the fuel compartment.

Bee engaged his stingers and pointed them at Nova, “Put the fuel cells down.”

Nova froze, and turned back to the door where Bee stood. He seemed to think for a moment before removing his hands from the fuel cells. Instead he brought them behind his back and pulled out a staff. Engaging it as Optimus would his axe, the pole extend and glowed on both ends.

“You don't understand young one. We are on an important mission and need your fuel,” Nova spoke and twirled the staff in an intimidating spiral.

Bee gulped but held his ground, “So are we, there isn't much more important than saving the universe!”

“The universe?” Nova immediately pulled out of his fighting stance, “In what way?”

Bumblebee didn't lower his stingers but did give a confused look, "I mean , being stuck in an infinite time loop is kinda universe - ending... Right?"

Nova stilled, disengaging the staff in his hands. "Oh slag," his face dropped, "Oh Slag!" Nova swore again before running past Bee and pushing him aside.

"MEGAZARAK!" he yelled as he ran back in the direction of the walk, " 'ZARAK STOP!"

The office almost seemed quiet without Blurr's moments of intrusive rambling. At least Getaway and Jazz, who stopped by more and more often these days , kept the conversation going as Cliffjumper interjected occasionally. Prowl would be lying if he didn't worry for Blurr -- in Prowl's assessment of the situation , sending one mech there alone was a death sentence , even if Blur was the fastest mech alive. But there wasn't anything he could do about it.

"Another riot," Getaway groaned as he laid his upper chassis on his desk, "This time near the Nexus! Do civilians even know the damage they could have done to that equipment!"

Prowl shrugged in response as he tapped away at his console, finalizing something he wasn't really interested in.

Getaway huffed again before straightening himself out and sitting up. For a moment he glanced around his desk.

"Do you have an extra data slug? I'm out," Getaway asked as he turned towards Prowl.

"Um, sure one sec," Powl responded. For a brief moment Prowl had to try to remember where had stored those dang things , but eventually resorted to his bottom drawer.

When he pulled it out something odd slid across the bottom of it. Prowl raised the thing in his servos before he recognized the object.

Sentinel's datapad.

"Oh slag," Getaway gawked at the object in Prowl's servos. "Is that Sentinel's?"

Prowl grumbled, "I must have forgotten it... " And he had. Probably intentionally, after all he had heard bout Sentinel from Jazz he really wasn't looking forward to doing any work for the mech.

Getaway peered over his shoulder at glanced at the screen of the datapad. "Well, you gonna read it?"

"I probably should," Prowl grumbled, mostly to himself. With a slight hesitation he turned the screen on, immediately greeted with a note from Sentinel . He began to read :

Longarm Prime,

Following the incident on Earth, this datapad was recovered among the effects removed from Optimus Prime. When escaping the Steelhaven like a coward, he left it behind. The contents seem to be a work of fiction written by a mad-mech. It is my conclusion that Optimus is slagging crazy. Please document this and get the information on record as soon as possible.

Sentinel.

“The data slug?” Getaway brought Prowl out of his thoughts.

Prowl blinked his optics for a click before realizing exactly what Getaway was asking. It took him another click to actually find where he had put a few extras.

“Thanks,” Getaway’s voice seemed to dissipate as Prowl returned his focus back to the datapad. If it was about Optimus he wanted to read it.

There were several document files on the pad simply labeled 1-11. Prowl tried accessing anything else on the pad but it had seemingly been wiped of any other information.

Situating himself in a comfier place in his chair, Prowl started with file 1 and began to read.

Loop 2-

I think something has gone terribly wrong. The only good to come of this is Prowl is no longer dead-

Prowl read on, suddenly engrossed in exactly what he was reading. At so many points he wanted to throw the pad down, to call it false and leave it at that; To simply add what needed to be added to a report and call it the end of his shift. But something prevented him from it, some sort of curiosity drove him forward, leeching onto every word as he went.

Loop 7-

I'm going to have to take drastic measures. It's time I ask Megatron to help.

None of this made sense , logically. It was fiction. It had to be , right? Optimus was insane, warped in the processor. He had to be.

Loop 10-

I have to try something new- perhaps something with the Allspark. Did something go wrong when Prowl joined with it the first time? When it revived me the first time?

At some point Prowl realized Getaway and Cliffjumper Getaway and Cliffjumper must have shut down the office and left for the night, but Prowl didn't quite notice until he was done reading.

Prowl needed to tell someone. At least that , was his first instinct. But tell them *what* exactly? That Optimus Prime was crazy? Or that he was stuck in a time loop and so desperate he had worked with Decepticons of all mechs to try and fix everything?

Prowl sat in the empty office staring over the datapad with interested disdain. He didn't know what

to believe , especially when it came to his own death in these so called 'loops'.

If this was true it changed everything, explained everything. If it wasn't true it was still just as troubling. To have a mech with that kind of processor glitch in control of the Magnus Hammer was almost worse than it simply being a traitor.

Optimus had never seen glitched to Prowl. Secretive and anxious yes, but not glitched in that way. Not like-

“When Getaway commed me to come get ya out of the office I didn’t really believe him,” A extremely familiar voice came from the door behind him.

In response Prowl immediately turned in his chair to find Jazz leaned on a desk by the door, his blue visor glowing in the dark of the office.

“What’s got ya working so hard,” Jazz questioned, moving towards Prowl and leaning over his shoulder to look at the datapad. “Sentinel’s ‘pad?”

Prowl hesitated, his mind racing at a mile a minute.

“Jazz. I need you to take a look at something for me.”

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all for so many great comments! They really help!

The next part won't take as long i hope!

Up next;

Megatron gets some more advice.

The Tyrant Usurper team expands.

Prowl makes some decisions.

Optimus' Day Off

Chapter Summary

This time!

The crew expands.

Megatron gets a phone call

Optimus can't even have a single day to himself

Jazz and Prowl face a hard truth.

smut.

Chapter Notes

I'M BACK!! AT 4 AM!!! WHOOHOO

special thanks to my beta Primus-why for helping me with this for a few long nights, tis chapter is 2.5 times longer than what I usually write and she is truly amazing for sticking with me through all of this.

So yes, the final section does contain smut. If you're not a fan of it simply skip it! It's not really plot relevant.

Also for anyone wondering I do have a tumblr, It's pretty barren right now but there will be some stuff on it posted about the fic along with other transformer posts and some art work (I've got some art planned for this fic too so stay posted!)

Well here you go; <https://laprisonmechanic.tumblr.com/>

thank you for reading!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

It took a few more of Nova's frantic calls , but eventually they had access to the space walk again. Large claws pried open the door, making a horrible screeching as they did so.

Megazarak stood in the door looking only slightly worse than he had before. Covered in just a few small dents but a bunch of black scorch marks the war machine seemed unaffected by his current state. Bumblebee would have been happy to see the mech in worse condition but his thoughts were cut short when he noticed the bright, spattered energon on his frame.

It wasn't Megazarak's.

Bumblebee pushed past the behemoth's legs and cringed at the sight.

They weren't dead-- In horrible shape, but not dead. Starscream was even still standing too, thankfully. Although his nullrays had been ripped from their wiring the seeker still looked like he was ready to kill. Looking closer though, he probably wouldn't have been successful. There were several gashes to his armor, each leaking a bit of energon. The seeker's stance wavered slightly, but his optics focused on Megazarak. In another vent he had launched himself at the other war build.

Bee paid no mind to the fight breaking out again and instead focused on Blitzwing. He felt a strut-chilling desperation flood into him as he scrambled to Blitzwing, who had seemingly taken the brunt of the damage. His cannons were mangled-- Megazarak apparently had gone for the weapons first. The rest of him wasn't any better. His chest plate was crushed inward; his one leg had a servomotor so deep, it looked like someone had tried to rip it off. It was in no condition to stand on, explaining Blitzwing's position on the floor.

"Bumblebee," Blitzwing's angry faceplates growled at him, "Get out!"

"Not without you, big guy," Bumblebee glanced over to where he had entered. Starscream was pinned to the floor, and Megazarak and Nova were conversing above him. "Good thing I've been such a good medic, right? I'll go find a med kit to patch you up, okay?"

For a brief moment Bee contemplated rubbing the energon off his... his... (What was Blitzwing to him exactly?) his *friend's* faceplates, but hesitated. They weren't out of danger just yet.

"There seems to be a happy coincidence," Nova said. Bee turned to look at the mech beside him.

Blitzwing made a gurgling noise in his throat and spat out a glob of energon on the floor at Nova's pedes.

At least now Megazarak had hoisted Starscream off the floor and was holding him tightly to his side. Nova stood in front of them, nervously playing with his hands.

"'Happy' is not a word I would use in this situation," Starscream snapped, "Let go of me you filth!" He yanked himself away from Megazarak.

"So I know we got off on the wrong pede, and I'd like to try and start over..." Nova started to say.

"No," Starscream growled, "You don't get to come on here, beat the shit out of us and want to 'talk' like Autobots. Now get off our ship, both of you."

"You know them?" Bumblebee whispered aside to Blitzwing who at some point switched back to his icy face.

"Meet ze mechs who starred this whole fragging war," Blitzwing motioned with his shoulder.

In the background Starscream continued to bicker with the two new mechs, occasionally flicking his claws and wings in an annoyed display.

"You're telling me *those two* started the war?!" Bee asked, genuinely surprised.

"It is largely believed that, jez..." Blitzwing started yet didn't have time to continue as Nova's voice interrupted him.

"You know Optimus right?" Bee's head snapped back to the scarred mech.

"Yeah," Bumblebee grit his teeth, "What's it to ya?"

“Perfect! We’ll just hitch a ride with you guys then!” Nova proclaimed, looking between them all.

“Excuse me?!” Starscream screamed, “You come onto my ship, attack us and then want to come with us?!”

“Like I said, a misunderstanding, we need to get back to earth with you.” Nova flashed an apologetic smile before reaching out a hand, “Perhaps we can come to an agreement?”

“There is *nothing* you could offer that could actually convince me that this is a good idea,” Screamer hissed out, plating flaring in indignation.

“I will literally kill Megatron and leave the planet and Decepticons to you,” Megazarak declared, rolling his optics.

There was silence for a few vents before Starscream sighed.

“How can I trust you to keep that promise?” Starscream crossed his arms.

Bumblebee internally relaxed. It would be better on Optimus if Megatron was dead, wouldn't it?

For a moment Bee looked back to Blitzwing. The larger mech was sitting very still, a cold waft coming off from his chassis. Though barely noticeable Bee could see the stiff posture of his jaw and upper body.

Megazarak huffed again, “I could just continue pummeling you two until you bring us along, or you both die and we get the little yellow one to navigate.”

“Then we’re now merry crew of five!” Starscream laughed nervously and held out his arm to motion towards the ship, “Welcome to the Tyrant Usurper.”

Jazz looked stiff, almost angry as he read Optimus’ datapad. The darkness off the office didn't cast any friendly shadows over him either, only aiding to his serious aura. It was making Prowl somewhat nervous.

“Ya write your report and ya hand it in. That’s all there is to do,” Jazz passed the worn out datapad back and crossed his arms.

Prowl looked down at the device, frowning deeply at it. Part of him really wanted to dismiss it like that, but another part didn't; another part of him wanted to test it out.

“There’s a way to test it,” Prowl stated, flicking through the content of the datapad, “he brings up some easily investigatable events ... ”

“You’re taking this seriously?” Jazz pulled up Getaway's chair as he asked, “It’s the ranting of a mad mech. Ya should treat it like that.” Jazz sat and leaned back in his chair and let his arms fall to his sides.

“You didn’t see some of the things he did, Jazz. He knows things, he took out Starscream with one well placed hit,” Prowl made a motion down to the datapad, “If this is true he would have known Starscream was coming.”

“Okay, say he was going through this... this whole time loop thing,” Jazz grumbled, “doesn’t change the fact he’s working for the Decepticons now.”

Jazz had a point. Even if Optimus had gone through all this, and initially turned to Megatron out of desperation, it didn't excuse it now. But regardless of whether Optimus had gone off the rails or not, if any of the information on these was true it gave them quite a bit of useful information.

Prowl wanted for all this to fake, especially since a lot of the data on these pads suggested large security breaches and, well... his own death.

“We need to test it,” Prowl decided, looking Jazz straight in the visor. He glanced down at the datapad and started skimming through the logs. “Here, Optimus brings up an experiment Perceptor does, making the Jettwins into flight frames. We should just go check it out real quick.”

“So what, ya wanna go break into the science division?” Jazz dead panned.

“It’s off limits to us?” Prowl asked, not exactly sure why they would be.

“Science is off limits except for mechs with special permission,” Jazz kept a stern expression, giving Prowl an idea of where this conversation was going.

“Jazz-”

“Prowl, I know you were with that Space Bridge team for a long time but there are regulations here: rules.” Jazz sighed before standing. “Write your report and come on mech, ya need to get some recharge. I think it would help”

Prowl frowned. For a moment he looked at the datapad before putting it back on his desk and sighing. It was obvious Jazz wasn't going to help out, and it was even more obvious that if Prowl pushed this it would just cause more trouble.

“You’re probably right,” Prowl relented, “I'll write that report in the morning, let's get out of here.”

Prowl walked with Jazz out of the office, only briefly glancing back to his desk.

“Shockwave, you have no idea how good your timing is,” Megatron huffed into the console looking up at the Decepticon spy on the monitor.

“My liege?” Shockwave questioned.

“Shockwave. The interfacing plan did not work. And now I'm in need of a way to discipline him.” Megatron groaned. When Shockwave didn't answer immediately Megatron sat himself up straight and looked at the single opticed mech. “What is it?”

“I am going to need more information to logically access the situation my Lord,” Shockwave provided, still looking intently at Megatron.

“It was going well, I had helped him with a personal problem, and all was going according to plan when he suddenly attacked me. Since then we’ve had a small squabble and he's taken Decepticon brand.” Megatron explained, purposely brushing over several details.

“You had a disagreement?” Shockwave questioned, “What about?”

Megatron hesitated, not exactly sure what he wanted to reveal. Admittedly he had actually, maybe, possibly, *could* have said some things that *may* have made the situation worse.

“Small squabble is a bit of an understatement,” Megatron turned at the sound to find Blackarachnia sauntering into the room. She bowed politely before continuing her approach. “My Lord, I may be of assistance.”

“Proceed ...” Megatron’s tone had gone dark, an indicator he was not too happy about his conversation being interrupted.

“Optimus has gone from avoidant to defensive, and now he’s simply become full on passive aggressive. He used to do the same thing to a friend of ours,” Blackarachnia smirked, looking up to the screen and at Shockwave. “Honestly I’m surprised you didn’t ask the ex-Autobot for help.”

“Are you questioning my decisions?” Megatron hissed, not a fan of the tone she had taken.

“Of course not my Lord,” she bowed lowly once again in apology, “I simply believe you may have not have known the connection between me and your new toy.”

Now interested, Megatron motioned for her to continue.

“Optimus and I were cadets together. We had a falling out, but I can assure you he hasn’t changed that much since then.” She started to say, but before she could continue she was interrupted.

“And you’re completely sure you still know him even after thousands of years in the Decepticon army?” Shockwave’s calm voice came from the console.

“He may have some weird slugging ‘future sight’ now or whatever, but he still apologizes like a chump. He’s also still *way* too attached to his team,” She waved a hand as she spoke dismissively at Shockwave, “I’m pretty sure he hasn’t changed that much.”

“And you believe your personal relationship is better than my data as a high ranking officer undercover?” Shockwave questioned, his dismissive undertone was not lost on Megatron.

“I knew Optimus for our entire cadet years and during our time as Minors in the Autobot army. I know him,” she too took an edged tone when she spoke.

“Your suggestion then,” Megatron motioned to Blackarachnia.

“Have you... ya know, talked to him? Honestly? Or you know... asked about what went wrong?” She huffed, motioning between them. “All of the repair mechs are at least open to it.”

On the monitor Shockwave scoffed. “This isn’t some small issue one can simply fix with a small conversation.”

“Shockwave has a point,” Megatron said, up until now he had been passive in absorbing information but now found it important to interject. “The Prime is extremely curt when we speak and does not allow me any contact with his crew.”

“First of all,” Blackarachnia leaned herself on the console and stuck her hip out, “Since when does Megatron, Lord of the Decepticons, the slag maker himself get pushed around by a Prime? Secondly, Optimus isn’t here today. It’s only Bulkhead and Ratchet.” She began picking at her claws as she finished.

“He’s *what?* ” Megatron growled out.

“Not here,” She said again, “Ratchet said he was on a ‘medical vacation’,” using air quotes to emphasize her point.

Megatron balled his fists. “I have somewhere to be. None of what was said leaves this room.” he said before storming out of the main control cavern , assumably towards the work site.

Shockwave raised a claw but before cutting the feed remembered something, “Would you please tell Megatron that there is an intelligence agent stationed on E arth now?”

“Is it that Blue speedster you’ve been fragging?” Blackarachnia turned her gaze up to the monitor and smirked.

Shockwave went silent for a beat before asking, “How do you-?”

“You think you’re the only undercover agent on Cybertron? Please, those mechs like to gossip more than I do,” She smirked before moving to follow Megatron out of the room, “Bye Lover boy!”

Shockwave cut the comm feed.

The security in the main science sector of Metroplex was easier to gain access to than Prowl would have thought. The vents he had climbed into on the roof we're snug against him but he fit and that was all that truly mattered.

He couldn't blame Jazz for not wanting to test his theory ; he would get in a lot of trouble if they were caught -- and one could only guess what the punishment for treason and espionage would be - - but there was a deep curiosity and concern that drove Prowl.

He wouldn't admit to himself that maybe-- just maybe -- he was slightly concerned for Optimus. Instead he focused on the events that could possibly be going on behind all of their backs.

Longarm Prime might actually be a spy.

Megatron might be back and might be about to attack Cybertron.

Prowl may die at the end of all this.

The Allspark could even break.

With renewed purpose Prowl increased his crawling pace through the vents. All he had to do was find the Jet-twins. If they were being turned into seekers-- everything else was likely true. And if he could get some evidence to Jazz...

Well , maybe something could be done about all of this.

The thought made Prowl anxious; more so than he already was crawling through the vents of an ‘off limits’ area.

It took some time to find the room he was looking for exactly. The science sector of Metroplex

seemed to twist and turn in on itself , and several times Prowl thought he had gone in circles. It occurred to him at some point that it was probably built that way on purpose, and decided it would need a more strategic approach. Prowl set his arm against the left wall and stuck to it.

Eventually he found what he was looking for.

‘What he was looking for’ manifested in a soft blue and orange glow streaking in through one of the vents. No noise came from the room below him but the slots in the vents were thin and almost impossible to see through. Even worse so the vents were screwed in through the outside, leaving no choice but to break through it if he wanted to enter the room.

At least that was the conventional approach, but Prowl knew of one other way he might be able to get through the vent.

Processor over matter.

Prowl laid himself down, focused on the bolts in the vent and hummed.

Focus was important ; it was the key to this technique. He had never used it before , having never completed his training. Sometimes he missed the dojo desperately. And his master Yokeatron--

Aannnd he wasn't focused anymore.

Prowl blinked slowly and tried to recenter himself. Shifting a bit in his lying position, he tried again.

This time however his concentration wasn't broken by his own musings , but a loud noise in the room below him. The noise, which Prowl recognized as a secure door opening, startled him into flipping over.

He couldn't make much out of the room , but he could at least hear what was happening down there.

Prowl could recognize three sets of pedes, none of which sounded particularly heavy , which ruled out Ultra Magnus. It was odd how quiet the mechs were, none of them talking as they entered the room. There were several clicks and clinks before any of them started talking.

“You're kinda quiet,” an unfamiliar and eccentric voice boomed out, “I think it's some of the best work we've done yet.”

"I suppose." another mech replied. That time Prowl recognized the speaker as Perceptor-- he'd know that mechanical voice anywhere-- that was the mech who had dragged the two twins away in the first place."

This wasn't looking good.

And it was about to get worse.

“I'm just at a loss for words.” Prowl knew that voice *intimately*.

Jazz.

“Thank ya Brainstorm, Perceptor. I'm just going to take a look around if ya don't mind.” Prowl fought the urge to yell as Jazz's voice continued to resonate within the room.

“We will leave it to you then Jazz Major,” Preceptor stated.

It took several clicks for the two mechs to leave the room , and several more clicks before the room was silent. Then, slowly , there was a squeaking at the vent entrance in front of him.

Then Jazz appeared as the vent cover was removed.

“Your ventilations aren’t as quiet as ya think, Prowler.” Jazz frowned up at him.

“Jazz--”

“But you were right,” Jazz offered a small smile, “couldn’t get OP outta my mind, had to come check. Luckily for me,” Jazz gave his signature smirk, “The new promotion came with clearance for the science sector. Wanna come take a look?”

Prowl nodded and the two mech wasted no time wedging the black and gold mech from the vent. Once Prowl was safely on his own two pedes again in the sparse medical room he looked towards the blue and orange light he had seen earlier.

The twins were suspended separately in some sort of fluid that kept them in stasis. Cords and wires wound and connected themselves along their armor. The light that Prowl had seen earlier came from exposed protoform and biolights , where sections of armor had been removed.

Worst of all though, any resemblance to their past speedster modes had been removed. The place on the back of their pedes, where wheels had originally been forged, was now occupied by thrusters . Where wheels had been on their shoulders, now perched proud and sturdy wings .

“Well,” Jazz huffed, “I hate to say it but OP may not be crazy after all.”

“Optimus was right,” Prowl muttered, “Megatron is *alive* and coming to invade Cybertron.”

Megatron hadn't exactly known what to expect when he finally entered the Autobot base. But it was definitely not... *this*.

It was almost insulting; the lack of security or a formal command center left the place distinctively civilian. Megatron assumed the exterior of the factory was a facade, hiding something much more effective for battle. At the very least, he had expected Optimus to come barrelling out at him with his weapon in hand, demanding an explanation for why he was here.

But there was nothing. The base, if one could even call it that, was more akin with a nonchalaunt bunker. Tiny dust particles that lingered in the air cycled through his vents, and several windows were smashed in. There was a main room with a couch and an entertainment console along with various canisters of organic fuel. Further back there were plenty smaller rooms connected by a cramped corridor, one of which Megatron could identify as a medical bay. It was dingy, dusty, in disrepair and entirely unexpected.

Megatron turned and looked back towards the entrance. The bay doors would allow several mechs through at a time. None of this was even strategically useful. It was so... well , in a way disappointing. It was so relaxed, so--

“Megatron?” Optimus’ voice came from behind him , causing Megatron to wheel around to meet the gaze of the smaller mech.

All anger that had been building up on his way over was gone.

Megatron fought the urge to take in a startled vent. Optimus' red optics starkly contrasted the surprised and confused gasp his lip plates fell into.

His lip plates. Megatron had never seen them, they had always been covered by that stupid battle mask. It hadn't occurred to him that the mask likely came off. But now, seeing his full face for the first time... Megatron suppressed another invent.

And then it was gone.

Optimus' battle mask snapped back into place within seconds, only leaving the piercing red optics visible. They looked unnatural.

"What are you doing here?" Optimus questioned, standing only just outside one of the doors in the corridor. He held several datapads balanced in his arms, each one leaning slightly more to the left, threatening to fall. In the other hand the new Decepticon held a can of that gross organic fuel while an insulation blanket was draped over one of his shoulders. He looked so casual like this, without that stupid hammer he had such a domestic look to him.

Megatron quirked and optical ridge as if to say 'I was going to ask you the same thing.'

"Right, yes, Apologies my Lord," Optimus bowed his head, a motion of submission Megatron preferred to see in his followers, but on Optimus it looked off. "Ratchet threatened me with construction equipment to the helm if I came in to work today."

"Yes," Megatron grumbled in an attempt to regain his composure, "Your medic threatened me similarly if I bugged you during your 'day off'. Quite a vocal mech that one."

Optimus seemed to take issue with that, and refused to bring his helm back up. Megatron could tell his teeth were clenched together as he spoke, "*Ratchet* can be quite protective, yes. He means well."

Obviously Megatron had said something wrong, but he wasn't sure exactly what. Either way he changed the subject. "I see you've been catching up on your reading." Megatron motioned to the datapads clutched in Optimus' arms with a clawed servo.

Optimus looked up at him, his glare almost caught Megatron off guard. The former prime puffed himself up and made his way back into the room he had come from. When he re-emerged, he now balanced the Magnus Hammer among his other possessions, and made his way into the main room. In a swift motion the small mech placed his oil down on a side table and threw his insulation sheet onto the couch. Taking his now free hand, he quickly subspaced his datapads and turned to Megatron who still stood near the entrance of the factory.

"Shall we go then?" Optimus asked as he continued his way towards the warlord and the exit.

Puzzled, Megatron responded, "Pardon? To where?"

Optimus paused, now only several paces in front of Megatron, the Magnus hammer comfortably held in his left servo. He was certainly confused when he spoke, "The worksite? Why else would you be here if not to bring me back to work?"

For a moment Megatron found himself asking the same question. Sure, he *had* shown up here to take Optimus back to work, but now? After actually seeing the smaller mech relax for once it almost seemed like a crime to pull him away.

“Perhaps I came to see if you were alright,” Megatron crossed his arms and straightened his spinal strut before relaxing his tone, “The medic said it was a ‘*medical* vacation’, perhaps I am simply concerned.”

“You?” The ex-Prime almost laughed out, allowing a restrained chuckle. “The all mighty Megatron, My Lord, is concerned due to a forced vacation?” Optimus at last let his rigid posture relax, allowing the hammer to tilt in his grasp as he lost his harsh glare.

“I... I simply am,” Megatron forced out. It was a weak excuse and he knew it. But Optimus looked better than he had in months, and the warlord was finding it hard to rip him away from that. Nor had Optimus-- in those brief moments since Megatron had first entered the room-- exuded his usual determined and somewhat hateful aura. “In fact if your medic suggests it, I order you to stay here.”

Optimus stopped his confused chuckle and simply stared at the warlord. “You’re... serious?” He genuinely looked surprised at his order, though Megatron could only see his optics.

“I am,” Megatron nodded, motioning over to the couch, “I believe I was interrupted you fueling.”

The ex-prime kept his gaze on the warlord and grumbled, “I’m unsure what you’re attempting here.” Despite the obvious defensive confusion in the brightly coloured mech’s voice, he made his way back into the main room, picked his oil back up, and sat himself on the couch.

“I’m not attempting anything,” The grey mech raised his hands in defense as he walked towards the couch.

“I didn’t know me relaxing ment you would be staying,” Optimus grumbled. He half shuttered his red optics and swished the oil around in the can as if unsure what to do with himself.

“I can... help if you need,” Megatron offered, coming to stand by the side of the couch. In a bold move he picked up the insulated sheet and moved towards Optimus-

“Don’t touch me,” The smaller mech hissed-- a real disgusted noise coupled with a spiteful look that bore straight into the Warlord's optics. His entire body seemed to tense and Megatron could almost hear the pistons straining.

Megatron almost shivered.

There was a small beat and Optimus seemed to recognize what had come out of his mouth and the tone that had accompanied it. Immediately he looked down and away from Megatron, shrinking in on himself. “My apologies my Lord. I meant no offense.”

Megatron hated that tone, he only now realized.

Whatever relaxed intonation Optimus had taken was suddenly gone, along with any defiance Megatron had gotten used to.

Blackaracnia's *have you tried talking to him?* rang in his processor for a brief moment.

“No, I have noticed your aversion to touch... I apologise for acting inappropriately.” Megatron's voice came out hoarse as he taked.

Optimus’ finials twitched as he slowly looked up at the larger mech. “I’ve just got a lot going on, is all... a lot has happened.”

Was the small mech opening up to him so freely? With a simple apology? Was it that easy?

Optimus pulled back his battle mask and brought the can of oil to his lips, sipping delicately. The Decepticon Lord watched with interest.

“I was told you Autobots use casual interface as a way to relax,” Megatron offered , yet still attempted not to sound presumptuous as he found himself moving to sit beside Optimus , settling himself on the floor.

Optimus frowned into his fuel, “I haven’t been able to interface in a while. Ratchet suggested that I try to... but I haven't really been able to.”

“Oh?” said Megatron. Shockwave had mentioned mechs who didn't interface with their teams were generally outcast. Yet , the ex-Prime didn't seem to be at odds with his team. Quite the opposite actually.

“Yeah,” The small mech mumbled, “that night at the factory...”

“You kicked me in the chest plates.” Megatron grumbled.

“I’m... I didn't mean to. It's somewhat of a reaction. I’m sensitive in certain areas” Optimus huffed and finally emptied the rest of his oil down his intakes.

“Your scars.” Megatron stated. His thoughts confirmed when Optimus nodded in response.

“And if one was to be very careful around your chassis?”

Optimus gave him a very curious look, his lips falling into a slight pout. He set down the empty oil can as his whole demeanor shifted to unease, “Megatron, I--”

“I was brash before. Please, allow me to help you *relax*, ” Megatron allowed his voice to fall into a deep rumble as he he leaned forward, placing his head between Optimus’ thighs.

The Prime sat up and leaned back, an unreadable expression on his face.

Megatron flared his plating, making himself look larger on the floor. Bringing his attention to the pelvic paneling before him, he carefully dragged a claw across it. When it didn't budge Megatron let out a low rolling of his engines, allowing for them to speak silently to the mech before him. *See how powerful I am? I could rip worlds in half! I'm suitable! Open for me-*

When Megatron bit down softly on the small mech’s thigh and still the small mech did not respond Megatron became concerned. Looking up didn't squash his concerns either.

Optimus was stiff, his optics wide as he watched Megatron. Even more concerning was his battle mask was back in place and his right servo was outstretched reaching for the Magnus Hammer.

Megatron pulled back, bringing his helm out of the space between Optimus thighs and into a respectable distance. A soft anger rang in his spark at being rejected again , but was quickly squashed as the Warlord recognized the brightly coloured mech's expression.

Fear.

“I don’t understand,” the small mech seemed to force out, “You brand me, you seem so angry and then *this*. You're between my legs threatening me with your teeth and claws and engines and...If

you want me to go back to work just say so , just please stop it with these games. Please.”

Megatron felt a growl build in his chest. His first response was anger. It tightly wound itself in his chest and he was ready to throw insults back at the *Autobot* who dared think he was threatening him into interface -

Instead he forced himself to take a long vent and refocus on the fear plain on Optimus' faceplates.

“I am not playing games Autobot--” the saying slipped out of his mouth and immediately he regretted it, “Prime-- L-loyal--”

Something dark and unwanted entered the Prime's optics and EM field, caking the atmosphere in a thick layer of static that seemed to weigh down on them both.

“I will be returning to work my Lord. Excuse my *indecenty*. It will not happen again.” Optimus rose from his spot on the couch. Without much more of a glance he pivoted on his heel and made his way towards the exit.

Soon enough Megatron found himself alone in the Autobot base, unsure of what exactly to do.

“At least he didn't kick you this time.” Shockwave's voice sounded throughout the Halls of the Decepticon base sometime later.

Megatron simply let his helm fall onto the console with a loud *crash* and groaned.

Bumblebee really needed to get some lessons from Ratchet. The med kit held way too many items and Bee had no idea what half of them did. Eventually he pulled out the soldering iron, some mesh and some more basic tools out from the kit and placed them on the berth side.

He did his best to make the room a neat as possible before Blitzwing would come inevitably stumbling in after the Decepticons had their 'Adult talk' (yes , Bumblebee was offended by that) and would need some repairs. Bumblebee was determined to do them himself.

He was laying a sheet of insulation on the berth when the door opened, revealing a very tired-looking but very welcome Decepticon.

“Jou're injured,” was Blitzwing's first comment, motioning to Bee's still injured leg. Despite the stoic tone Bee could tell he was concerned. He was getting better at that.

The door shut behind him and Blitzwing moved to pick Bumblebee up. The small yellow mech darted out of the way.

“You first big guy. You've got a lot more holes than I do.” Bumblebee motioned to the berth and hoped Blitzwing would give in without argument.

To his surprise the large mech went silently to the berth and laid himself down, being careful of his injured leg.

Bee grabbed the soldering iron and climbed onto the triple changer's chest. Settling himself Bee set to work on a gash on his upper chassis, bringing the iron down and sealing the tubing underneath.

Bumblebee moved to another gash, being careful to again to avoid--

Was that a servo on his aft?

Bee tried to move again but this time the servo pressed down, forcing his pelvic plating against Blitzwing's midsection. And then he started to *vibrate*.

The roll of the triple changer's engines felt good underneath him as it vibrated his entire frame.

"Blitzwing," Bee started but lost his voice when Blitzwing squeezed his plating. "You're injured--"

"Mechs where I'm from quite like the war-torn look," Blitzwing rumbled.

"I mean , really Blitzwing , I'm flattered, I am pretty hot stuff but seriously," Bumblebee waved the soldering iron, "We should fix you up."

Click-whir. Hothead rolled his engines again but this time an incredible heat accompanied the vibration.

"Enough talk tiny bug!" Blitzwing growled at him. "Open jour panelling!" Blitzwing flared his plating in a display Bumblebee couldn't understand.

Bumblebee hesitated. Blitzwing was still leaking energon from several wounds, but it didn't seem to put off the triple changer.

Perhaps this was alright after all...

With another powerful and warm rumble from the larger mech below him Bee snapped back his pelvic paneling.

A low growl emitted from the mech below him; less of a vibrating rumble and more of a warning this time.

"Jour *valve*! I do not want jour spike," Blitzwing growled out.

Bumblebee glanced down at himself. His spike stood up, fully pressurised between them. The yellow LEDs that ran along the black plating in a zigzag pattern along it reflected dully along both of their plating. Bumblebee looked back and huffed.

"I already told you that you wouldn't fit in me Blitzzy. Not to mention any charge you release is going to fry me alive!" Bee snapped back.

"I vill not be taking it from... from--"

"What?" Bumblebee grumbled, "An *autobot*?"

Blitzwing's persona changed with a quick *click-whir* back to his blue faceplates and stilled, looking up at Bee with a slight concern.

"Well Decepticon," Bumblebee tilted his helm down but kept his gaze on Blitzwing's optics, "Let me show you exactly what an *Autobot* can do."

Bumblebee set to work-- years of expertise coming back to him. He left his spike out, a show to the Decepticon underneath him that he was in charge (that's what Decepticons did, right? The whole dominance thing?). He dipped a servo onto the seeker's wing and dragged it downward feeling for responsive sensors.

The other servo made its way up to the Decepticon's neck , and Bumblebee rubbed his thumb over the sensitive tubing and cabling there. Soon Bumblebee found himself drawn to the triple changer's injuries and leaned down towards the larger mech's chassis, kissing the mended wound delicately. That at least earned him the click of Blitzwing's fans engaging. For a few more minutes the smaller mech dipped his servos into gaps in the larger mech's armour, kissing carefully along the dents in his chest plate.

“My array Bumblebee,” Icy grumbled, “focus your attention *there* .”

Bumblebee sat himself back up on the triple changer's waist and removed his hands to cross his arms .

“So quick to the punch Blitzbrain,” Bumblebee huffed. Turning his helm to look at the Decepticon's array , Bee whispered again, “I want your port , Blitzzy.”

Blitzwing's connector stood at attention but his valve cover had stayed closed.

Bumblebee took a servo and reached behind himself, aiming for the Decepticon's equipment . Without shifting his hands into stingers he could only muster a static charge between his fingers, but on sensitive components it was usually enough.

Grasping Blitzwing's spike behind him Bumblebee gave it several long strokes. The metal there was unnaturally cool, but the beige protoform and sporadically placed biolights pulsed in his servo nonetheless. The spike had several ridges along it, which Bee found extraordinarily inviting, but he focused on his task. He waited for Blitzwing's fans to kick up another notch before loosening his grip, and allowing a static charge to dance between his fingertips.

“Bumblebee vat are you-”

He shocked Blitzwing's spike.

Blitzwing let out an undignified yelp and retracted his spike.

Bumblebee mustered what confidence he had and delivered the most intimidating stare he could provide, aiming it directly at the Decepticon underneath him.

“Your valve Blitzwing,” Bumblebee said, his tone stern and reprimanding.

Blitzwing's face shifted, this time red with anger. His visor was brighter than usual , reflecting red against the rest of Bumblebee's plating.

There was a recognizable click behind him.

Bumblebee smirked.

Sliding down the rest of the Decepticon's chassis, Bumblebee laid on his stomach and settled himself between Blitzwing's legs. Bumblebee raised a servo to the exposed valve. It was gorgeous. Tan and purple LEDs shone brightly and pulsed along delicate, malleable black metal. In fascination the yellow mech dragged a digit down the soft mesh.

The valve in front of him clenched down, a small trickle of lubricant starting to form around the entrance. The legs around him tensed too, squeezing him softly.

“So tense Blitzbrain,” Bumblebee rumbled, moving his finger back down the mesh and collected the lubricant.

“Vat are you getting at Bug!” Blitzwing hissed above him, “Vhat is this game? Frag me already!”

Bumblebee smiled, finally dipping a finger into the valve before him. It was tighter than he had expected from a mech so large. The port hugged his finger but easily took another as he pressed two digits into the mech above him.

“You’ve got a pretty whore port Blitzbrain. It’s very slick, welcoming and just for me . I’m very tempted to frag you as you are.” Bumblebee pumped his fingers slowly now, scissoring them occasionally just to watch the LEDs flicker under his touch.

When Blitzwing's usual banter didn't follow Bee pulled his gaze from the valve in front of him to look up at the mech who owned said valve.

Blitzwing was looking down at him, still angry and rumbling his engines threateningly.

“ ... Blitzy?”

“Vhy are you being so gentle!? Vhat game is this ?!? ” Blitzwing hissed down at him.

Bumblebee continued his pumping motion at a pace he knew would have been utterly frustrating. When Blitzwing let out a soft whine , Bee brought up his thumb and rubbed the bright purple node above the Decepticon's valve. “You love it though. See? Your port is so wet for me. Do you want my spike now?”

Blitzwing bucked his hips, “Jou’re annoying even in berth!” Hothead propped himself up on his elbows and flashed his gritted teeth at the small mech.

“Well that's no way to ask politely for a spike,” Bee smirked, scissoring his fingers once again. “Come on Blitzbrain, all you gotta do is ask.”

Blitzwing lifted his hips slightly and let out an angry hiss.

Click-whir. A manic laugh suddenly came from the mech above him , followed by a slew of words Bumblebee could barely catch.

“Slow down, bolts-for-brains! I can’t understand--”

“I give in, I give in!” Blitzwing dropped his head back , allowing a snake-like tongue to loll out of his mouth (Another thing Bee would have to remember for later), “Do it already!”

Bumblebee circled his thumb with a bit more pressure on Blitzwing's exterior node and smiled, “I said: *ask.*”

In a bold move Bumblebee started up another static charge between his digits inside Blitzwing's valve , careful to keep it teasing and light along his dataports , and not painful for the warframe. His valve seemed to ripple steadily on his fingers now, a brand new flow of lubricant starting to form.

Click-whir. Blue. “Bumblebee enough already--”

Click-whir. Red. "I vill rip you apart for this! No more--"

Click-whir. Black. "Magic fingers! Magic fingers!"

With a final change and familiar clicking noise , Blitzwing's icy persona stared down at him. He paused for a moment, legs squeezing Bumblebee a little tighter before he spoke.

" *Please ...* "

That was all Bumblebee really needed.

It took him no time to line himself up with the Decepticon's valve. The size did make it a bit awkward but Bumblebee swiftly made it work , not wanting to agitate the larger mech any further.

On his knees now , Bee pushed into the mech before him. It was cold-- but not loose. Blitzwing groaned, an animalistic noise that reverberated through both mechs. Adjusting himself slightly Bee slid out and back in again , setting a steady pace for himself before pushing in fully and hooking himself into as many data-inlets as he could reach. His felt own ridges connect with the waiting receiving docks , and waited for the connection to be complete before sending any data.

The lubricant sliding between them only aided the small mech's first databurst. It wouldn't be enough to overwhelm the mech writhing above him , but it was enough to make Blitzwing moan softly. Bee continued the slow pace with his data bursts waiting for--

Click-Whir. " **Get on with it BUG!** "

Bumblebee chuckled but complied, making the pulses faster and harder. Something seemed to click within Blitzwing then , and he finally initiated a feedback loop between them.

The small mech yelped as data passed between them freely now. It wasn't long before Blitzwing shuddered underneath him . The triple-changer let out an aggressive grunt and sat up, grabbing Bee and holding him tightly in his servos. Bee squirmed for a moment before he felt a powerful pulse from Blitzwing , signalling his overload, and forcing Bee into his own overwhelming climax .

The large mech still had Bee in his grasp, grinding and pressing their arrays together-- like he was a living 'facing toy-- as the data feedback between them began to dissipate.

It took Bee several long seconds to be absolutely sure none of his circuitry had fried , though his legs still felt weak. His vents were running at full power , but the cool air coming out of Blitzwing's vents was what truly helped him cool down. Slowly , the Decepticon released Bee from his servos.

Bee pulled out, disconnecting himself from the warframe in front of him , and wiggled his way between Blitzwing's thighs, deciding to sit on top of them for a few minutes instead .

"So how was that Blitzzy? Got what you expected from a tiny Autobot? Bet I blew your mind , eh?" Bee grinned up at the triple changer as he climbed off the berth and closed his panels.

"It was... satisfactory," Blitzwing grumbled, looking down at his own bared equipment.

"Satisfactory? Come on Blitzwing, you loved it ! And don't worry about the mess Blitzbrain, I'll clean you up while I fix you up," Bumblebee turned back to the first aid equipment, rummaging through it. "Did you see the soldering iron? I think you've started leaking more, if that's possible."

Bumblebee looked back to Blitzwing who was still staring at himself. Alarm bells went off in

Bee's head.

"I didn't hurt you or anything, did I big guy?" Bumblebee looked to his larger counterpart with concern.

That seemed to snap the Decepticon out of whatever trance he was in. It took Blitzwing a moment to respond, but when he did his voice was soft and almost nervous when he spoke, "It is not... acceptable for someone of my position to be on the receiving end in the berth."

"What so like... your sexual status is linked to your, what, military position? That's kinda dumb."

"Vell the Autobots simply sleep with whoever and whomever for social gain. It is not much better," Blitzwing muttered.

Bumblebee leaned down, finding the soldering iron discarded on the floor and retrieving it. He took a moment before speaking, "Well, I'd rather live in a society where I'm free to frag who I want, when I want, rather than one that says I can't use my valve because I'm a lieutenant."

"I wouldn't expect you to understand," Blitzwing sighed, laying himself back on the berth.

"Then just don't tell anyone, it's your business. And speaking of business, does this count as politics? Because I think we should bring back the 'no-talking-about-work' rule in berth. This topic is depressing," Bumblebee said, climbing back up onto the triple changer and turned the iron back on. Starting on a new injury Bumblebee continued, "If you were to start the data exchange, you'd probably fry me. If you wanna interface we should probably do it this way."

"Ve could argue politics forever. I say ve just ditch it all together" Blitzwing grumbled, giving Bee access to the rest of his chassis.

"Only if you stop beating yourself up about using your port," Bee hummed, pausing his work to look Blitzwing in the faceplates.

"Fine," Blitzwing grumbled, "What happens in our berth, stays in our berth. And don't shock my spike again or I *will* fry your circuits."

Bumblebee smiled and set back to work repairing the berthmate underneath him.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for reading! Please leave a comment and I'll get back to you asap!

Comments really help me with motivation and help with super long chapters like this one!

Thank you all so much for the support!

A Literal Call to Action

Chapter Summary

A phone call gives Optimus exactly what he's been looking for,

Prowl is so done.

Bumblebee comes home.

Chapter Notes

It's done, It's here, It's unedited.

Take this. Take this and let me never see this chapter again. End the suffering.

But in all seriousness thank you all for the support, this story isn't dead, It just needed some time for this chapter, But hey! it's almost 7,000 words! so it's a long one!

Thank you all!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“It’s been weeks Jazz,” Prowl hushed over the lunchroom table, “It’s been weeks and we haven’t done *anything*. ”

Jazz shushed him from across the table, trying to ditch the subject as he had been doing for the last few days. It wasn’t as if he really needed to be quiet, It wasn’t as someone in the lunchroom would have heard them over the noise. No, at this point Prowl was sure Jazz was stalling.

“If you go out and do something on your own again Jazz...”

“I’m not going to. It’s just been a lot to process... I just have a lot of conflicting feelings is all,” Jazz mumbled, “There isn’t even much we *can* do really.”

“We can go to the Magnus, Sentinel, literally anyone except Longarm,” Prowl hissed.

“And say what?” Jazz tapped the desk in front of him, his mumble turning into a harsh whisper, “We listened to the infamous traitor Optimus Prime and you broke into a secure facility? We’ll both be arrested and then there is *nothing* we can do, and that's Only if we don't get caught by Shockwave and thrown into an incinerator first!”

“What’s this about an incinerator?”

Prowl wheeled around to find Cliffjumper blinking dumbly at him.

“It’s a long story Cliff,” Jazz brushed off, “what’s up, I thought you said you couldn't come to

lunch today.”

That seemed to click with the secretary who turned his gaze to Prowl, “There’s someone in the medical bay that wants to see you Prowl. Apparently it’s kinda important.”

“Oh please don’t tell me it’s Blurr,” Prowl said as he stood, awkwardly hopping out of the bench, shooting a small glare to Jazz as he did so.

“Oh, no,” Cliffjumper immediately responded before glancing down at the datapad clutched into his arm, “It’s actually one of team Athena, you know Rodimus’ crew? Well they ran into some problems-”

Jazz huffed, “Some problems? Only *two* of them made it back Cliff.” Jazz stood after that, finishing his cube.

Cliffjumper’s face fell, “It’s Hotshot, he wants to talk to Prowl.”

Someone had been calling the Orion for several days now.

Optimus and Ratchet hadn’t noticed for a while, but on one of Ratchet’s check-ups for Omega Supreme he had noted several missed hails from back on Cybertron. They called the same time every earth night-cycle which made Optimus believe it was someone who knew their schedule. But on the other hand, that may have been a coincidence.

It wasn’t as if Optimus took the time to keep Cybertronian time anymore.

So that meant it could have easily been Sentinel or Ultra Magnus demanding an explanation for that datapad he had left them. At best that meant that they would offer help, at worst that meant they were coming back to earth; with more fire power this time. That could be a real issue.

Megatron could have called Tarn and his merry band of murderers and now Tarn was up to introduce himself to Megatron’s new toy as a threat. Unlikely, but it wouldn’t have been the strangest thing to happen to him.

Either way he would have to answer the call.

The ringing from the console froze Optimus.

From behind him Bulkhead’s voice pulled him from his thoughts, “Uh... Bossbot? Are you going to answer that?”

“Get it over with kid, postponing this ain’t gonna help,” Ratchet added.

Optimus answered the hail.

It was a relief when Shockwave’s face came up on the monitor.

Optimus didn’t know Shockwave well. Out of Megatron’s inner circle Optimus probably knew him the least. But if Shockwave was calling him privately it meant one of two things; one, Shockwave was about to threaten him for or about something he’s done and that was a threat he could manage. Or two, Blurr was back on earth.

Optimus really hoped it was option two.

“You have some nerve calling us after reporting us to the Elite Guard last time!” Ratchet seethed up at the Decepticon on the monitor.

Shockwave canted his antlers forward in curiosity before directing his large red eye to Optimus. “Optimus, let me first say congratulations on joining the Decepticons. It seems Megatron's interest in you is well earned.”

“Megatron’s interest... good to know about that, *Optimus*,” Ratchet’s suspicious tone dug into Optimus’ plating, he could almost feel the medic’s glare on him.

“Later,” Optimus glanced over his shoulder to Ratchet before returning his attention to Shockwave. “What do you want Shockwave?”

Shockwave seemed to shift nervously, something Optimus had never actually seen him do before. If Optimus was reading him right, which he may not have, Shockwave wasn't about to threaten him.

Shockwave was going to ask about Blur.

Well actually it was more likely Shockwave was about to question them regarding Blur. Or even more likely ask him to kill the blue agent.

Optimus frowned, “He’s here on earth, or will be soon. Won't he?”

Shockwave's antlers stood up at attention. “And people say my attitude is uncanny,” He observed. Eventually he brought a claw up to scratch his neck, “Optimus I am in need of a favour.”

“Like hell we’d help you!” Ratchet stomped up to console but before he could smack the button to hang up Optimus grabbed his wrist.

“Ratchet,” Optimus released the medic's servo, “I need to talk to Shockwave. Please.”

Ratchet gave him a stern glance but pulled his hand away from the console.

Shockwave seemed to ignore what had transpired and continued, “As you seemingly know Agent Blur is on earth now. I sent him there for recon. Standard procedure. But due to... well a *spider* we both know very well I believe Blur is in more danger now.”

Optimus raised an optical ridge. “Okay. Two questions, Why do you care and what do you want me to do about it?”

Shockwave's made that odd nervous motion again and this time he hesitated to answer. “I want you to convince Agent Blur to return to Cybertron. He refuses to return until he finds something useful to report. The fear of a rogue Prime may convince him otherwise.”

“You want me to scare Agent Blur?” Optimus questioned.

“Yes,” Shockwave confirmed, leaning into the monitor.

“If I do this for you,” Optimus crossed his arms and rolled his shoulders in an attempt to look intimidating, “I want a favour.”

“Optimus I am your superior and this is an order-”

“Shockwave,” Optimus interrupted keeping a calm tone, “Why aren’t you going to Megatron with this? Assumably you don’t want Megatron to know. So I’m your next best choice, the least likely

to report this.”

Shockwave's antenna twitched.

“You’ve dealt with me once Shockwave. And you know I’m not some ordinary mech. And! And I have been in a bad mood the last week. Oh. Plus when it comes to you and Blur I have so many, *so many* issues.” Optimus glared at Shockwave, “So I’m going to get Agent Blur back to Cybertron like you asked and I’m going to ask you to do something for me. But none of that is going to happen unless you tell me exactly why you care about what happens to Blur.”

Shockwave finally moved from his stoic position. His voice was almost hoarse when he spoke, a noise Optimus had never heard before.

“I am... involved intimately with Agent Blur and don't want him to come to harm.”

The entire deck was silent.

It was impossible. How many times had Shockwave *killed* Blur and now he wanted Optimus to save him? This... made no sense.

But pushing Shockwave too far could ruin his chances of getting a message back to Cybertron. It wasn’t worth the risk.

“I’ll need something to convince Blur I’m on his side,” Optimus huffed.

Shockwave took pause at that, as if searching for the answer to a difficult question, “Tell Agent Blur ‘high treason’ and he’ll know I sent you.”

“That makes no sense,” Bulkhead mumbled.

“I’ll return Agent Blur to you.” Optimus finally decided, “But in return you need to tell me what Prowl has been up to.”

“Concerned for your old team member?” Shockwave inquired.

“You could say that,” Optimus smiled.

The medical bay waiting room was quiet save for the hums of the several mechs in the room. The room was unbearably white, emphasizing the starity of the room. The few littered posters only held Prowl’s attention for so long before his mind would wander to exactly what Hotshot would want from him.

Prowl had never known any of the members of team Athena really, though he had heard a lot about Rodimus Prime from Getaway. Other than that nothing. There was no reason Prowl should have been called here.

But something was distracting. Prowl refocused on a poster reminding patients that regular fuel pump maintenance prevented most rust infections but something still pulled at his processor. Not Hotshot, weirder stuff had been happening to Prowl as of late so it wasn’t that.

His mind *should* be on Hotshot, but something else was itching at him. For a moment Prowl shut off his optics and let the feeling pull at him.

Anxiety. Fear. Something is *wrong*...

“Jazz Major!”

Prowl snaps his Optics back online and up at the mechs now in front of him. It took him another moment to register that Jazz and Cliffjumper were both standing. Prowl shot up to join them, not recognizing the mechs yet but following suit.

And then Prowl met their gaze.

The first mech came through the door in excited bounds towards the trio of mechs, stopping in front of Jazz and smiling widely. He was slightly larger than Jazz, the three points to his helm adding a unique look to his overall appearance. His mostly blue and yellow paint job with smaller red details looked like it had been recently polished, reflecting almost seamlessly his surrounding.

“Zeta Prime!” Jazz smirked and reached a hand out to the mech. Prowl only has seconds to respond as another mech followed him into the waiting room.

“Who’s this, Zeta?” The new mech questioned, leaning down in the doorway. He was probably the tallest model Prowl had ever seen aside from the Decepticons and Ultra Magnus himself. Nor had he seen a mech that Blue before. Though mostly a deep Royal blue, his detailing also shone a sky blue in some areas and navy in others.

“Senator Nominus!” Cliffjumper helps standing at attention.

Prowl was silent. Stuck in place. That feeling... that anxiety is screaming at him now, with these mechs so close. Something is wrong. Something is terribly horribly-

“This is Prowler,” Jazz says, the name pulling Prowl out of his own head and back into the conversation.

Shakily, Prowl hold out his hand and offers it to the Prime in front of him. Zeta seems to take no notice and greets him, introducing himself.

The contact made Prowl nauseous, but he held himself strong and still.

And then he shook the Senator’s hand.

The room spun for a moment, that racing in his spark increasing rapidly until-

Suddenly the room was gone, for a brief moment Prowl found himself stood in the middle of earth, if the soil was any indication, there was fighting so much energon, mecha everywhere-

And then the scene changed, making another nauseous wave rise in the ninja-bot. Now he stood in a dark room, large and towering. Was that- Optimus? Standing in the middle of the ornate room beside Zeta, looking over some sort of galactic map-

And the scene before him changed again. This time Prowl stood in a lonely room. For once the scene paused, allowing Prowl the moment to move forward. Though the room lacked any furniture, a lone balcony sat along the opposite side of the room. Prowl found himself moving forward, towards the light the balcony provided.

Prowl’s processor glitched for a moment, and a figure appeared where he was headed. Prowl stopped beside the unfamiliar mech and paused.

He knew this mech, who was he? Decepticon obviously. Deep purple and standing tall over the city now coming into view. He held a sword, but for some reason that didn't concern Prowl. The ninja bot wanted to call him... Cyclonus.

"The lineage of the Primes has always been holy," Cyclonus said, not looking at Prowl, "But this... This is anything but."

Prowl's processor glitched again, this time revealing a almost completely destroyed city below them. Though most of the destruction had seemingly passed, several fires still burned, lighting the buildings below.

"Cybertron is lost," Prowl feels himself speak, though he can't comprehend the context that would make him say such a thing.

Cyclonus breathes out, Prowl can see the Decepticon's plating flatten against him. For a moment Prowl can hear the crackling of a few fires and something crumbling in the distance.

"We still have New Kaon-"

"For how long?" Cyclonus interrupts, finally turning to Prowl, "They've killed any other Matrix bearer, their machines... their weapons are on their way there already I'm sure."

"Megatron will hold New Kaon. I'm sure," Whatever Prowl was arguing for it seemed urgent.

"No," Cyclonus looked to the left and Prowl experienced another glitch, bringing into focus Perceptor beside him.

"It is ready," Perceptor stated simply, and Prowl doesn't know why but his spark sinks.

"This is the only way Prowl," The Decepticon huffed, placing a servo on the mech's shoulder for a brief moment, before moving to follow the scientist.

Cyclonus paused for a moment before turning once more back to Prowl, "Nominus must be stopped at all costs, whatever happens I will find you, and i will make sure none of this happens."

And everything went dark. Prowl was floating, where was he? What was happening? He didn't understand-

"Well it was nice meeting you all!" Zeta's chirp brought Prowl back to the present, the white walls of the infirmary almost blinding him.

"Truely," the Senator smiled, looking between them, "But Zeta and I have other business to do, so we must take our leave."

The rest of them mumbled their goodbyes save for Prowl who was still recovering from... well whatever that was.

"That was rude Prowl, you should have at least said something to them," Cliffjumper scolded the ninja-bot before he sat himself down again.

"How do you know them?" Prowl rushed out, his processor still ringing.

Jazz sat and raised an optical ridge, his visor tilting upward awkwardly as he spoke, "Zeta spent some time as cadets together, he's landed himself a position right under Senator Nominus."

"You spent way to much time floating around space rocks Prowl," Cliffjumper chimed in.

“Why were they here?” Prowl focused on Jazz now, standing tense.

“Looking into a security risk or something, I don’t know” Jazz shrugged, “Senator Nominus handles a lot of internal affairs.”

Prowl stayed silent for a moment, regaining himself before sitting back down between the two mechs.

“Remind me why you two even tagged along,” Prowl crossed his arms and slumped in his chair.

Jazz shrugged, “I’m avoiding Sentinel,”

Cliffjumper hummed, “Boredom mostly, but the official reason is I’m making sure you do what you’re told,”

Prowl let himself fall out of conversation after that, trying to make heads or tails of whatever *that* was. His head was still spinning but at least now that anxiety and nausea had faded, leaving way for confusion to set in.

“Prowl?” a small femme came up to the group of them, “Hotshot can see you now.”

Contacting a secret agent becomes a lot more easy when you know a general idea of where said agent is going to be and when. In short, setting a trap for Agent Blur was much easier than it usually was.

On a normal loop Optimus would have had to wait until Blur showed up racing. Because of changing events it could take anywhere from a few months to a few years to find the blue speedster. Optimus had taken a gamble assuming Blur would show up on earth before the invasion, he usually did show up before the Decepticons made a big move anyways.

At least now that gamble would pay off.

Well if they could catch Blur first that is.

So, he just had to catch a mech he could run across the Galaxy... not a problem right?

He had gone alone, much to the disdain of Ratchet and Bulkhead. They had both protested when he had said that he was going alone but there was a major factor both of them were forgetting.

Neither of them were that quick. An old medic and a bulky farmer? If either of them were caught by Blur, Optimus stood at a large disadvantage. It wasn't as if Optimus was that quick himself but he did have one defense the speedster wouldn't be able to get past.

The Magnus Hammer.

Shockwave mentioned something about Blur’s mission being information or capture.

Optimus would use that to his advantage.

He picked a spot much earlier in the day, an empty storm canal that would allow for no civilian involvement and lots of room for Blur to move. Shockwave had ensured Optimus that Blur would be in the area this week. The point of this was a conversation, not to corner the poor mech.

Optimus used the Magnus hammer to call few unnatural lightning shows, just to draw attention to himself.

It only took Blur an hour to show up.

Optimus had sat himself on the edge of the canal, the Magnus Hammer in on servo and Yocketron's helm in the other.

Optimus half expected Blur to drive right up to him. Unfortunately Blur had fell back onto his training and went for a much more sneaky approach.

Optimus almost didn't have time to react and the bright blue mech pounced like a lion from the treeline beside the canal, stasis cuffs in hand. All Optimus had time for was to launch himself into the concrete of the canal.

He landed with a loud clash, the Hammer breaking his fall. He immediately bounced back up, turning around to where Blur had landed in the canal.

The agent stood proud, helm raised and stasis cuffs grasped firmly in his hand. He didn't speak.

Blurr was a small and fast mech, only slightly larger than Bumblebee. He would use that speed and size to make quick close attacks before bolting out of Optimus' reach. The solution? Make himself untouchable in the first place. How much electricity could he take before he fried himself?

Optimus took the moment to do a show of his own. He spun the hammer in one hand before stamping it down into the concrete, cracking the mard material. A loud clash of thunder could be heard overhead.

“Agent Blurr! I want to talk-” was all Optimus got out before Blur rushed him again.

Optimus really liked the small agent and in turn really didn't want to hurt him. But this was still going to hurt.

Optimus activated the hammer and diverted the electrical current towards himself. It was painful but at a low charge it was tolerable.

Weapons of mass destruction we're not mention to be used defensively apparently.

Blur's hand came in contact with his chassis and was immediately shot back. The small agent pulled several steps back and took pause, obviously evaluating the situation.

Several warnings popped up in Optimus's internal display. He cringed and turned off the charge. He would have to try a new strategy.

“Longarm Prime sent me!” Optimus shouted, overcoming the electrical buzz in his own audials.

“As if I would believe a traitor and Decepticon like you! Though Longarm has been making a lot of private phone calls lately, if this is some sort of secret operation I would have been warned, why would Longarm contact you,” Blur darted again but this time didn't attack Optimus. Instead he moved backward as if to emphasize his caution.

“He asked me to send you back so Megatron wouldn't kill you,” Optimus relaxed his posture somewhat, “It's a lot more complicated than that, we should have a talk.”

“You're saying Longarm Prime contacted you to protect me against your new master?” Blur

motioned to the faction symbol on his chest, "This makes absolutely no sense, why would Longarm, a high commanding intelligence officer, contact a traitor that he sent me here to capture in the first place, none of this makes sense."

"It's... kinda a long story Blur. One I would love to share with you," Optimus raised his free hand in surrender, "I just need you to put down the stasis cuffs and come with me so we can talk somewhere a little less open."

"Like I'm going anywhere with you Decepticon-"

"Longarm told me to tell you," Optimus nervously cleared his throat, "...‘high treason’ if you did not believe me."

Blur silenced himself and stood oddly still.

"Is that... did I remember that correctly..."

"You did," Blur stated curtly, as if a spell was broken, sub-spaced the stasis cuffs and glared at Optimus, "fine. Why did he send you?"

At least Shockwave hadn't lied to him.

"Initially to get you back to Cybertron safely," Optimus walked over to where he had discarded Yokeatron's helmet, keeping an eye on the agent and picked it up, "But I kinda have my own plans. Agent Blur, Longarm Prime is not who you think he is. But again, I'd rather not discuss things here."

"Your base will be fine to talk, although I'm not sure I entirely trust all of this. One wrong move and I will arrest you and the rest of the Space Bridge repair crew on the spot, without hesitation do you understand me?" Blur's vocal glitch came back full force as he strode towards Optimus.

Optimus nodded. Whatever 'high treason' had meant, it had done the trick.

"I'll meet you there then," Blur stated and when Optimus gave him a curious look.

"You don't think my first operation when I arrived was to check into your base? Followed by where you all went during the day cycle? I still haven't quite figured out why exactly you go to that cave everyday but the security there seems a little advanced. I am intelligence after all."

Blur transformed quickly and took off, without much more information leaving Optimus staring dumbly.

The room was oddly quiet.

Though all three mechs had entered and came to the bedside, Hotshot remained passive, not even acknowledging the Intruders.

He looked... together, was the word Prowl would use. His one leg had obviously just been rebuilt and had yet to be painted properly. Other than that he looked pretty good; No more major injuries, and seemed to be recovering well.

Still something was off.

But that was kind of the normal now.

“Hotshot...” Prowl reached a hand out, but hesitated and pulled it back

“I met Bumblebee,” Hotshot spoke softly, “He was annoying but, you know I’ve never seen any mech stand up to a ‘con like that.”

Prowl heard the engines around him stutter, but held his composure, “You saw Bumblebee? On the outer edges?”

Hotshot nodded, and turned his head finally towards Prowl, “How long did you know?”

Prowl paused, “How long did I know what?”

Hotshot’s face contorted into a disgusted snarl, “Don’t play dumb with me, how long have you known that this was all some ploy, That Optimus is planning on betraying Megatron!”

Silence.

Prowl was a calm mech; He liked to meditate, he kept his emotions at bay and he generally overall didn’t cause a scene. He had stayed calm during Optimus’s betrayal. He had stayed calm when he had been thrown into a military position he had barely liked, and he had even stayed calm when Jazz had thrown a civilian in a military prison.

But, today had been way too eventful of a day. Confronting Jazz, whatever in the pit had happened with Nominus, and now *this*.

“HE WHAT?!” Prowl Exploded, flaring both his plating and his EM field, gritting his dentae and leaning forward over Hotshot’s bed.

Hotshot flinched back, “I assumed you knew...”

“Well that much is obvious! How the hell did you find out!?” Prowl growled.

“I heard him and a ‘con talking about it before they,” Hot shot mumbled, “I saw a third mech...I was hiding...Look moral of the story is we’re *wrong* about what happened on earth. Your team has an in with the Decepticons, and they’re using it against them.

It was Jazz who piped up next, his voice harsh in response to the thick air around him, “You aren’t seriously going to believe this are you? You really think a mech who attacked Ultra Magnus of all mechs is seriously going to betray the Decepticons. Look, I’m not saying we should through this aside but-”

“But what?” Prowl snapped, “After what we’ve seen, after everything that’s happened you’re just going to continue going by the rules and let this continue on the way that they are? If any of this is true, which it probably is, I’d never trust Bee with a secret *ever*, there is no way you can continue to sit idle. And if you do choose to just sit here, let this all pass by, that’s on you. But I’m doing something about this. I’m not just sitting around anymore.”

Prowl turned on his heel and spun back around to the door, exiting swiftly and slamming the door behind him.

The room fell into an uncomfortable pause before Cliffjumper piped up once again, “Okay so I’m confused. Do we hate or like Optimus now? Can we start from the beginning...?”

“I have to get back to Cybertron!” was the first thing out of the speedster’s lip plates after Optimus had explained the situation. Immediately following that came a flurry of swears and profanities cursing Shockwave to the pit and back.

Ratchet had his hands deep in Optimus’ shoulder plating, fixing some resistors and a pretty badly fried potentiometer but still threw in his own 2 cents, “Shockwave’s an ass-hat yeah. But that still doesn't explain why Optimus *brought you back here and is jeopardizing a very delicate plan.* ”

The air was stiff with tension in the factory's medical bay.

Optimus huffed, shifting his weight on the medical slab, “Well plans have changed and I think we can risk it with Starscream off planet, we’ve only got a week or so before the invasion.”

“You think it’s smart to just say ‘hey, we’re invading your planet’ to a member of intelligence Optimus? You think he’s not going to just going to warn high command and do whatever he can to stop us?” Ratchet grumbled loudly into his audial, twisting a white painfully in Optimus' shoulder as he did so.

As Optimus winced the medic continued, “And next time you use the Magnus Hammer in such a reckless way I will personally rip the thing apart myself, do you understand?”

“Wait wait wait, back up, there’s an invasion? I would ask how but I have a sneaking suspicion it has something to do with that cave and Optimus defecting.” Blur questioned, looking between the three other mechs in the room before his optics widened, “You’re trying to get back to Cybertron.”

Optimus winced again when Ratchet moved down his arm to pick at more cabling there, “I’m expecting Blur to try and stop us, that’s kinda the point.”

It was Bulkhead who piped up this time from the door, “Uh... isn’t that kinda dumb?”

Optimus took a vent before leveling his gaze, “When Shockwave opens the Space Bridge Nexus, how many Decepticon ships are there going to be waiting on the other side ready to pile in? With the elite guard spread so thinly along the outer border, the civilians are going to be in grave danger, the entire planet will.”

When no one answered Optimus continued, “If we don’t at least prepare high command they’ll be at a severe disadvantage. We have to do it with a bit of stealth but it's mandatory. And though I’m sure I can take on Megatron and possibly a few others I can’t take on the entire Decepticon fleet. We need someone on the outside; on Cybertron ready to shut down the Nexus as soon as we’re through. Now I already tried sending Ultra Magnus a message-”

Blur seemed to vibrate in his seat before he verbally exploded, “Hold up hold up what makes you think at any point I’m going to let you through the Nexus to begin with! Not to mention this plan of yours is completely crazy and at no point, even if I was on your side of things, would I go along with it! Has earth made you all go crazy? I mean I know Optimus has, look at him, branded as a Decepticon... wait. You sent Ultra Magnus a message?”

“*Tried,*” Optimus emphasized, “It wasn’t successful or else he would have contacted us by now. They won’t answer my calls, technically I’m a terrorist.”

Ratchet cut a wire making Optimus jump, “Ya never told us about a message,” He growled

“I left a datapad on the Steelhaven. I assumed either Sentinel or the Magnus would've had

questioned it and called us,” Optimus shrugged, “It was worth a shot.”

Blur stood, crossing his arms and glared at Optimus with a vindictive determination, “It doesn't matter, I'm still going to have to stop you and prevent this so called invasion. There's nothing you can do or say that's going to make me change my mind on that!”

Optimus frowned, “That really is a pity Blur.”

Optimus hated pulling the ‘scary-rouge-Prime’ act to get what he wanted. And he genuinely did like Blurr, he was a good agent simply trying to do his best for his planet. So it pained Optimus to lay down hard truths for the small mech in such a threatening tone.

“Agent Blurr I apologize but I don't think either of us have the option of doing that,” Optimus pulled his arm away from Ratchet and stood to look over the small speedster. “You plan to go back to Cybertron and what then? Who's going to truly believe a spy who was sleeping with the enemy, listened to Cybertron's most wanted? Sentinel would rip you apart in a trial. That's only if Shockwave doesn't kill you himself first.”

Blur glared as if he didn't believe the mech standing in front of him so Optimus continued.

“He *will* kill you Blur. I know Shockwave and he may have asked me to spare your life but his mission comes first, no matter what. Longarm Prime was exactly the same, am I wrong?”

That's all it took for the small agent to deflate somewhat, “I-”

“Blur. I told Shockwave I would keep you safe and that's a commitment I intend to keep, but if you don't want Cybertron to fall to Decepticon tyranny you'll do as I ask.” Optimus sat back down, giving the small mech some time to process and some space to breathe.

“You're asking to commit treason, to let you and Megatron back on Cybertron,” Blur speed out after a pause, “You're asking me to help you do that. Do understand the destruction you'll cause, I can only assume you don't since you're going through with all of this in the first place, so after all this all I can really ask is *why* .”

Ratchet had set back to work on Optimus' arm now and was setting new wiring when he interjected, “That's a whole other story, one we should try to keep to ourselves, *Optimus* . Am I the only one who sees the potential threat here?”

Optimus shrugged off Ratchet's comment and focused on Blur, “All I'm asking you to do is deliver something for me.”

With that Optimus pulled away from Ratchet once more to grab Yoketron's helmet and held it out to the agent. “Deliver this to Prowl. No treason. Just a simple delivery.”

Blur looked over the helmet for a moment before taking it in a huff.

“Fine,” Blur grumbled, “But only because you've saved me fragging a Decepticon for another day. I'm assuming it's not a bomb, right?”

The Tyrant Usurper was quiet. Starscream was on deck duty and with Nova and Megazarak taking up the other berthroom Bumblebee and Blitzwing could comfortably sleep with each other without suspicion from their captain.

Condensation clung to both mech's as the last pulses of overload racked through them. Bumblebee relaxed, pulling out of the warframe and crawling up his armour. It took him a minute but eventually he fit himself into the curve over Blitzwing's chassis.

Blitzwing shifted underneath him and folded an arm over the small mech. Bee enjoyed the cool touch of the triple changer's plating as his systems came down to a more reasonable temperature.

Blitzwing cleared his throat and squeezed Bumblebee lightly. Recognizing the gesture, the small mech looked up to his larger counterpart.

"What's wrong Blitzwing?"

The war mech avoided Bumblebee's gaze, looking away as if trying to avoid whatever was bothering him. Bumblebee nudged him this time, emphasizing his concern.

"We're almost back to earth," Blitzwing mumbled, still not looking at the small mech on top of him, "I've just got a lot on my mind."

"You? With something on your mind?" Bumblebee joked, "that's new."

Blitzwing only rolled his good optic and scoffed. "Very funny Bumblebot and who is the space bridge technician again?"

Bumblebee glared up to the Decepticon who held him, "Not anymore Bolts for brains. I'm a fugitive."

"And that's better?" Blitzwing smirked.

"It's a lot more interesting," Bumblebee smiles back up at him before continuing, "But what's on your mind big guy?"

Blitzwing hesitated for a moment, "It is common place for you to interface with the other autobots, is it?"

Bumblebee raised an optical ridge at Blitzwing's uncertain tone. In response Bumblebee sat up and met the gaze of the triple changer, "I mean yeah. Not as much as I used to."

"You see Bumblebee, that is not common for us Decepticons. It may seem selfish but..." Blitzwing started.

"It's fine," Bumblebee smiled, "in a few cycles we'll be invading Cybertron, I don't think I want to interface with anyone before that, or after. Not if we're fighting together Blitzwing. I mean, that is if you think you can satisfy me."

Blitzwing seemed to relax under him.

"Bumblebee, there's something I want to do before we don't have the chance to," The triple changer's voice came out softly.

"What?"

Blitzwing didn't get the chance to finish as the door to their room opened with a tell-tale click.

"Oh well, this is interesting," Starscream's calm voice came from the doorway.

Without much notice the Decepticon under Bee shifted violently as he sat up. Bee suddenly found

himself hugged tight to the triple changer chest as red faceplates glared at Starscream.

“I mean I knew you two were close but...” Starscream let out a little chuckle and shook his head, “Not important. We’re entering earth’s atmosphere in a matter of clicks. Get yourself cleaned up-” Starscream fell into another small fit of giggling, “and come out onto the main deck.”

It was brief but after his statement Starscream left, covering his mouth as he closed the berthroom door.

“What was that about...?” Bumblebee looked up at the triple changer still holding him.

“Zat,” Blitzwing growled, “Is going to be trouble... possibly.”

“Possibly?”

Click- whir. Blitzwing changed to his calmer persona, “Zhere is more to Starscream to treachery and greed.”

Bumblebee pouted but only had a moment to contemplate what that had meant before her was scooted off Blitzwing’s lap and onto the berth. Blitzwing stood and made his way over to a small compartment on the wall and pulled out a cleaning rag. He briskly cleaned himself off before tossing the rag to Bee.

“Ve should get going,” Blitzwing hummed, watching the small mech clean his array off.

“So what?” Bee asked, “you aren’t concerned at all about Screamer?”

Blitzwing offered another contemplative hum before responded, “Starscream and I come from ze same city. Plus exposing us vould do him no benefit I can see. Vill it be used as blackmail at some point? Probably, but zat is ze least of my concerns.”

Bumblebee nodded, that answer would have to suffice for now.

With a few more moments of cooperative preening the two mechs exited their shared room and walked together to the main deck

Three mechs stood against the silhouette of earth that shone through the front windshield. Though the mechs were dark it was easy enough to make out who they were, their general unease with one another was obvious as Starscream stood away from the other two and no one seemed to be talking.

“Awe lighten up!” Bee called as he and Blitzwing entered the main deck, “We’re finally back!”

Starscream motioned out the window, “it’s a ball of dirt and water. I’ll celebrate when we arrive on cybertron within the next few days.”

“Well you know what is on that ball of much and dirt?” Bumblebee grinned as he pulled himself into one of the command chair.

“What?” Starscream rolled his optics.

Bumblebee straightened his injured leg and smiled, “actual medical care.”

That earned him a harsh laugh from Blitzwing’s random persona and a amused scoff from Starscream.

Their decent went just about the same as when they left. The ship jerked and shook as they entered the atmosphere but evened out as Detroit entered into their view. They swooped quickly in the darkness, approaching the clearing near the cave swiftly.

Bumblebee found himself holding Blitzwing's leg as they descended, stabilizing himself as they touched down.

The ship jolted once, and after settling Starscream released the controls (When had he moved to them? Bumblebee didn't know.) and stood, being the first to move to the back of the ship. The rest followed, but Bumblebee paused when he noted Starscream's hesitation."

"Megazarak, you wouldn't go back on our deal would you?"

Megazarak blinked a few times, and eventually Nova ended up elbowing his side.

"What, oh. No I wouldn't. Whatever, can we just get this done with?" Megazarak grumbled.

Starscream rolled his optics but hit the button to open the door.

The door opened slowly. The taller Decepticons seemed to brace themselves for something but Bee couldn't see, and instead kept his focus forward.

Things were silent as the bay door fully opened.

It was a relief to see Optimus, Ratchet (with a medkit in hand) and Blukhead waiting for him. Optimus kept looking confused for a moment before he side-glanced to the Warlord beside him.

Megatron was not as confused. Instead he bared his fangs dangerously at the new members of their crew.

"Prime," Megatron Bee could barely hear him speak, "With me."

Starscream moved forward first, strutting forward despite his glaring injuries. He took a moment, bowed, took an invent in and-

Bumblebee didn't notice when Megazarak had advanced, but the *Crack* of his clawed servos against Starscream's helm brought Bumblebee's attention straight to the giant Decepticon.

Starscream fell to the ramp and slid forward slightly.

Megazarak seemed unfazed by his own outburst and calmly continued his advance, "It's always so disappointing when your second in command tries to kill you isn't it?"

Megatron didn't respond and soon enough Nova was at Megazarak's side. The two made quite the imposing pair.

Still on the upper half of the ramp, Bumblebee engaged his stingers.

Preparing himself a hand made its way to his shoulder, drawing his attention up to the triple changer beside him. Blitzwing shook his head, keeping his focus on the two in front of them.

Bumblebee retracted his stingers and watched.

"I told you if I ever saw you again I would rip both of you to-" Megatron yelled at the now advancing Optimus.

Bumblebee could see Nova's head nod from behind as he interrupted the Decepticon Lord, "Are you Optimus Prime?"

"Optimus. It's just Optimus. But yes." Bumblebee could see Optimus waver, his faceplates blatantly in awe, his facemask sliding open.

The ex-Prime's advance was slow and cautious, he only stopped several feet in front of Nova, staring at his chest.

"Where did you..." Optimus' voice trailed off, "Who are you? Do you know?"

Nova seemed to straighten up, presenting himself formally, "I am Nova Prime, your great, great predecessor. And I have come to aid you in your quest for the solution to your problem," Nova offered a small wink to Optimus before continuing, "My travel companion and I have been wandering the cosmos for three hundred years trying to find you-"

"I always hated your long winded speeches," Megatron piped up, "And whatever's going on here I don't like it. So,"

Megatron pulled his swords out with an unusual flamboyance and spun the one, advancing behind Optimus.

Optimus easily turned around to block his way.

"Prime," Megatron growled, "I order you to stand down."

Bumblebee watched Optimus fall to his knees, suddenly prostrating himself in front of the warlord.

"Please. Please don't take this from me, I'm so close."

Chapter End Notes

Again sorry for the update speed, this one took a lot out of me.

Thank you for the comment, i'll be going back to answer the others probably tonight, thank you all to those who comment!

Next time!

Final Preparations.

Final Preparations

Chapter Summary

An Arrest, a bonding, conversations, and kisses.

Chapter Notes

Another behemoth of a chapter! 7,500 words!! WOOHOOO a new record for a chapter.

Here she is!! Climax's all around as all three plot lines come to a heading.

Thank you so much for reading!!

Also?? Grammarly??? saved my life???

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

How many days had they been back? Three?

And while Optimus, Nova, and Megazarak had been busy with each other it had left the rest of them with very little to do. With the Spacebridge in its final phases of construction, only days away from completion Bumblebee found himself with little to do.

At least now he could go on drives, see Sari or play video games with Bulkhead. At least there were things he could do.

But he didn't want to do them.

Okay well, that wasn't exactly right, he would admit. He could do them, was happy to do them actually, (anything was better than being stuck on that boring ship) but there was something missing; something he would rather be doing.

Seeing Blitzwing.

It hurt more this time around. Bee wouldn't admit it, obviously, he would never admit to missing the triple changer or how much it bugged him to be dismissed again.

It hadn't even been a sudden change. Day one had been great. They had spent the whole day together and just gradually over day two and three... Blitzwing seemed to put less and less effort into seeing him, distracted by something.

And anytime Bumblebee asked, Blitzwing would refuse to tell him; random giggling almost nervously as he did so.

This time though, Bumblebee wasn't about to sulk about it.

When his shift ended that night Nova, Optimus and Ratchet ran off somewhere, and Bulkhead had more calculations to run for the morning leaving Bumblebee alone.

“Jazz! JAZZ!”

Jazz turned to find Cliffjumper running towards him in the lunchroom. The red of his plating, juxtaposed to the grey of the lunchroom seemed to highlight the worried mech as he ran up to the white mech. Cliffjumper's brow was furrowed, his mouth plates slightly ajar as he came to an abrupt stop in front of Jazz.

When Cliffjumper finally stopped he hunched over, allowing his vents a moment to cool him slightly. Jazz thought for a moment Cliff may shoot back up and explain what was going on but instead, he stayed hunched, rummaging in his sub-space for something.

That something turned out to be a datapad. In a swift motion the thing what whipped onto the table in front of the major, almost knocking his energon over.

For a moment Jazz panicked.

Cliffjumper had been there with Hotshot, how much had he put together? Was this Optimus' Datapad-

No. It wasn't scuffed enough. It was too new, too pristine to have been Optimus'.

Slightly relieved Jazz picked up the small console and looked at what Cliff had thrown at him. For a brief moment, the Major didn't exactly know what he was looking at, some warrants looked so similar nowadays-

“Cliff, you didn't need to interrupt my lunch just to give me an arrest warrant for some random 'con sympathizer,” Jazz rolled his optics behind his visor, “I have an inbox for a reason. Plus this isn't my usual shtick.”

Cliff jumper did shoot up this time, standing straight and slamming a servo down on the table. For a brief moment several other mechs in the cafeteria looked towards them; cowering Cliff into waving apologetically at them before leaning forward towards Jazz.

His voice was a whisper when he spoke, “Jazz, you need to look at who that arrest warrant is for.”

Jazz glanced back at the form, this time reading with more attention.

Suddenly, as if the world around him collapsed, silence reigned and his energon ran cold. His visual feed focused on the words in front of him and everything else didn't seem to matter.

For Decepticon sympathies, Agent Prowl has been detained on sight.

Prowl.

And Ultra Magnus had submitted the report.

Co-signed by Senator Nominus the form was entirely valid, and in fact, filled out to an amount of detail Jazz was suddenly thankful for. It was meant to be sent to Longarm- er Shockwave to be

reviewed and investigated which explained why Cliff would have seen it.

“When was the last time you saw him,” Jazz asked, his eyes still glued to the datapad, submitted any and all details to memory.

“Not since the hospital visit, everyone had thought he had taken time off or something, or had quit,” Cliffjumper mumbled, “I know I don't have the whole story, but Optimus was on our side right? So if Prowl told Ultra Magnus, he thought Prowl was a ‘con sympathizer? Or-”

“It isn't safe to talk here,” Jazz interrupted, “We need to go grab Getaway and find somewhere secure to talk.”

They both shot up almost simultaneously. Jazz tucked the datapad under his arm and both mechs swiftly exited the cafeteria leaving behind Jazz's fuel in the process. Getaway would be in the intelligence offices, or on his way to fuel. Either way, if they took the shortest path through Metroplex's main corridor they would either bump into him or-

:: Jazz!::

Jazz wanted to pull at his plating in frustration. Why the hell would Sentinel be comming him now of all times, for pit's sake...

Jazz slowed his brisk walk, earning a confused glance from Cliffjumper. Jazz offered him an annoyed huff before moving a servo to his comm array. That was seemingly enough for Cliffjumper to understand and slow his own pace.

:: Yes Sentinel Prime sir?::

Sentinel's voice held it's usually annoyed grandeur only adding to Jazz's oncoming processor ache.

: Get your aft down to debriefing, IMMEDIATELY::

Jazz winced as Sentinel yelled on the line before cutting the line completely. By now Jazz had stopped his pace completely, Cliffjumper still at his side.

“Okay small detour,” Jazz huffed, starting to walk again, this time marginally slower, “I've gotta go down to debriefing. Mind bringing Getaway up to speed while I go deal with this?”

Cliffjumper nodded in agreement and turned swiftly to continue his route back to intelligence.

Jazz sighed, hopefully, this was quick but something in Jazz's spark told him it probably wasn't.

He had gone to confront Blitzwing.

Well, at least that's the last thing he had remembered. He had remembered traveling through the tunnels, anger burning in his lines as Blitzwing had come into view and then-

Well, nothing.

Bee had come to in a daze of confusion. Instinctively he checked several of his sensors as whatever had knocked him out faded from his systems. He was being held, he realized. Large servos wrapped their way around his waist, clamping his arms to his sides. He was covered in something soft at least, he realized next. Well more like wrapped in it. Even with his optics at full brightness,

he could only see the cloth covering his face.

The next thing and the most concerning thing at this point was the realization he was moving. Flying, actually. The wind sounded like static over his audials, aiding to his now recognizable feeling of vertigo. It took him a moment to regain himself, calming and clearing his head.

And then his signature sensor came online.

Whatever was holding him was Decepticon.

That brought him to action.

Struggling suddenly the hands around him shifted, instead of bringing Bee up to his chest and cradling him. With the stranger's arms now tucked tighter around him, Bee found little room to struggle.

A quick panic settled in, and Bee felt the need to scream, though the wind wouldn't allow any sound to travel.

Had someone found out about him and Blitzwing? Who else was in the room when he went to see Blitzwing? Was this Megatron? Lugnut?

Actually not Lugnut. It was definitely servos holding him, not pincers.

Okay, well was Blitzwing okay? Had they taken him somewhere? Megatron didn't seem like the elaborate punishment kinda guy though rumors said otherwise-

Suddenly he was lurching forward from his horizontal position to one more vertical. His tanks swirled uncomfortably for a moment, only then did Bee realize we're descending.

And then Bee did scream.

Engaging his stingers in a flurried panic, the arms around him jerked slightly, seemingly startled by the sudden noise.

Bee took the chance to flail his legs out getting the one arm from around him to loosen further.

Just a bit more...

With a sudden lurch, (Bumblebee hadn't realized they had sped up) they hit the ground, throwing bee into another round of nausea. He kicked once more, this time though it threw him free.

With a large clash, he landed on the ground, continuing to thrash. The blanket around him only aiding to his panic he attempted to rip and throw the thing off of him. Like a fog lifting, he finally got the blanket away from his optics, letting the fuzz and torn strips fall around his waist as he sat up.

"BLITZWING?!" Bumblebee screamed, looking up to the concerned triple changer above him.

Blitzwing leaned down above him, stoically staring at Bumblebee, though his monocle seemed to focus and unfocus noticeably.

Blitzwing was nervous.

"Holy Slag Blitzbrain, what the pit are you doing!?" Bumblebee finally got up, standing on shaking pedes, the fear still guiding him.

“Bumblebee-”

“You can’t just Kidnap a bot, Blitz! Where the hell is we and why the hell did you just scoop me up?!?” Bumblebee took a step towards the triple changer, pointing a finger to the Decepticons chest plates.

“Bee-”

“No!” Bumblebee interjected, “You ignore me for the last few days and then you... you kidnap me! Blindfold me, take me to the middle of the slagging woods!”

Blitzwing seemed to real at that. Standing from his crouching position Blitzwing continued to stare down at the small mech, his mouth falling agape slightly.

Bumblebee huffed, looking around the torn blanket bellow him, “Where the hell did you even get an organic blanket that large?!”

“I just... I just want to know what's going on,” Bee mumbled.

In a bold move, Blitzwing moves and took the small mech's hand, pulling him towards him.

“Blitzwing!” Bee cried out, “Blitzwing come on, talk to me! You're always hiding, you're always so worried about something! Just! Talk to me!”

Blitzwing didn't hesitate. Swooping up Bee into his arms he took an invent, “it is traditional.”

Bee stopped for a moment, unfamiliar with the sensation of being cradled in another's arms. Bee fought for a moment, struggling slightly but Blitzwing wouldn't relent. Instead, he held the mall mech tighter, tucked close to his chest.

“Put me down Blitzbrain!” Bee squealed, continuing to thrash.

The triple-changer didn't seem to listen though, instead of moving forward, to where? Bee had no idea. It only took a few more moments of insistent squirming to get Blitzwing to change his position. Instead of the (admittedly comfy) cradling, Blitzwing threw Bee over his shoulder.

“Enough Bumblebee,” Blitzwing hummed quietly, as if unsure of the words.

Bee took pause, bracing an arm on one of Blitzwing's shoulder to look over at his faceplate. From this angle, Bee couldn't make much out but one thing was for certain.

Blitzwing was nervous.

If the monocle twitch earlier didn't say it, the awkward twinge of a restrained EM field did. Though they were touching Bee realized he could barely get a reading on the triple changer's field.

“Bumblebee,” Blitzwing stiffly said, “I apologize, for scaring jou.”

“Not for kidnapping me?” Bumblebee mumbled, finally relenting and falling limp on the triple changer shoulder, “And so what? We’re just walking the rest of the way?”

Blitzwing seemed to take pause at that, uncertain how to respond, “No, I’m not sorry for zat, and jez. Ve will walk.”

Bumblebee huffed loudly, relaxing into his awkward position, “Can you at least tell me where we’re going?”

“Somewhere safe.”

“Come on Blity! You’ve got to give me more than this! For all, I know you could be taking me away to some freaky sex dungeon! I mean I don't blame you, I am pretty good in bed-”

Click-whir. Bumblebee was suddenly hauled back in front of the triple changer, coming face to face with red faceplates. It was actually quite a surprise, BLitzwing had held his stoic personality for so long but Bee had chalked it up to whatever the large mech was worrying about.

“I VOULD NEVER!” Blitzwing shouted, loud and deep.

Bee blinked a few times, regaining himself, “I was joking Blitzwing...”

“Vell stop! Stop joking! Zis is supposed to be romantic!!”

“Romantic?!” Bumblebee spat back, his anger rising once again, “YOU KIDNAPPED ME!”

“I’M PROPOSING TO JOU! JOU IDIOT” Blitzwing yelled back, bringing Bee closer to his face.

Bee’s energon ran cold.

“You... want to bond? You're kidding... right?”

Click-whir. Icy was back, more expressive this time. Looking a mixture of confused and terrified, he placed Bee back down, taking a step back on the rocky forest floor. Blitzwing seemed to shrink in on himself, nervous and hurt.

For the first time in a while, Bee felt weak and small. Bonding Blitzwing was entirely illogical. Bee was small, weak and fragile compared to the Decepticon. Bonding would likely only weaken the triple changer, especially with the upcoming invasion. He hated

to admit it, even to himself but it was true, he was bad for Blitzwing.

He had never thought about bonding. Hell, he didn't even really know another bonded pair. The idea had always seemed so foreign... so wrong whenever the smaller mech had heard someone talk about it. To be linked so permanently to someone, to never want to be without them...

There was a pang in Bee’s spark.

Why didn't that seem like a bad idea anymore?

Blitzwing’s plating shuddered for a moment and with a click-whir, his angry persona was back. The angry mech whirled around and shot several rounds into the sky, away from Bee.

“No!”

Blitzwing growled, shooting around and reaching again for the small mech and throwing him back over his shoulder. Bee landed with a clang on the Decepticon’s shoulder, the wind getting knocked out of his vents.

Blitzwing was running hot, his plating almost searing the paint off Bee's own.

“Blitzwing stop! Come on!” Bee yelled, attempting to prop himself up.

“I von’t lose you!” Blitzwing all but shouted back returning to his walking pace and bringing them both further into the woods.

“The pit is that supposed to mean?!” Bee struggled, trying to peel himself from the Decepticons plating, his own fans running to try and cool his overheating frame.

“Megatron is going to kill you!!”

“You’re going to kill me if you don’t put me down!!” that caught the triple changers attention. Blitzwing pulled Bee from his shoulder, holding him out like a drenched cat, under the arms with his body dangling.

For a moment the Decepticon just inspected the small mech, looking him over for damage as Bee allowed his cooling systems to bring his internal systems back into acceptable parameters.

Click-whir, and icy was back, “I don’t want to lose you. I thought if we bonded... Megatron couldn’t kill you.”

Blitzwing looked hurt, upset, more expressive than Bee had ever seen him. With his mouth slightly agape and his eyes set into a concerned scowl, Bee felt the pang of longing (he finally identified the reason for it) return.

“So you kidnapped me so you could bond with me,” Bee asked.

“It was the easiest way to get you to come visit me,” Blitzwing paused, “It is also traditional to carry one’s spark mate to the bonding berth. I know it seems stupid-”

“Okay,”

“...What?” Blitzwing questioned.

“I mean okay,” Bumblebee mumbled, adjusting himself in the triple changer’s hands, “But if we’re going to do it, we’re going to do this for the right reasons.”

Blitzwing seemed to stall, his processor not quite catching up to Bee’s words.

“I mean, glossing over the part where you were going to try and make me anyways, I don’t mind... I mean I really like you Blitzy. I mean I really really like you. Really really really. I want to do this because we love each other. Not because it’s our only option. So if you’re sure bonding me won’t... won’t weaken you, I want to do the selfish thing and bond Blitzy, even if you have some weird traditions.”

Suddenly Bee was pulled to Blitzwing’s chest and squished there, held tightly in the larger mech arms in some form of silent answer.

Bee tapped the larger mech’s chassis and smiled, “Okay there big guy, now you gonna tell me where we’re headed.”

Reserved really for severe cases and reunion frags, the debriefing rooms were barely ever used. Meaning, Jazz was either walking into one of two things.

One, Sentinel sitting on a desk, legs pulled apart trying to self-service until Jazz showed up or two, something had actually gone wrong, and Sentinel thought it was either above or below his pay grade.

Either way, Jazz would have to dismiss it and get moving. He had no time to pick up Sentinel’s

mess right now.

Opening the door with little hesitation it came abundantly clear that this was option B.

Sentinel stood at a table, turned slightly to see who had entered the room revealing two things Jazz was not expecting to see. Blurr sat on the other side of the table, his brow line furrowed and his mouth pulled into a stiff line. On the table sat something troublingly familiar.

How and why Blurr had Yokeatron's helmet in his possession was the first among a growing list of questions Jazz wanted to ask but held his tongue.

“Sentinel Prime Sir, I came as soon as you contacted me,” Jazz straightened himself and closed the door behind him.

“Jazz,” Sentinel started, “At least someone does what I ask.”

Blurr piped up next, a sudden burst from the restrained mech, “I don’t know what it’s for! All I know is Optimus wanted to get it to Prowl, I don't know why I don't know what it means Sentinel Prime sir! All I know is I need to get to Ultra Magnus, please I have to tell him about a sp-”

“No!” Jazz surprised himself by interrupting. Clearing his throat awkwardly he continued, “No, This is below the Magnus. Sentinel Prime sir, may I make a suggestion?”

Sentinel Prime waved his hand urging Jazz forward rolling his optics, seemingly more annoyed with the situation than anything.

“Let me take the Helm down to the evidence holding rooms and escort Blurr to intelligence. Interrogation ain’t really your job, is it? Longarm can deal with it. After all, wouldn't the best way to spite Optimus be to never have the helm reach its destination?”

“No-”

“Thank you!” Sentinel sighed out interrupting Nlurr, his shoulder drooping, “I’m supposed to meet HotShot for energon if you know what I mean,”

Sentinel offered a small smirk and moved towards the door. It was not really a surprise when the Prime stopped briefly to squeeze Jazz's aft before exiting the room.

There was a tense moment of silence between the two mechs before Blurr exploded once again.

“We can’t go to intelligence, Longarm is a Deception spy know as Shockwave and we really really need to tell Ultra Magnus, Optimus Prime is branded a Decepticon himself now, and we need to do something about it, they're building something on earth-”

“I know,” Jazz mumbled.

Blurr stopped dead in his tracks.

“You’re helping them,” Blurr stood, placing his hands on the table.

Jazz reached for the helm and brought it to his chest.

“Blurr there's a lot going on you don't understand, hell I barely understand it.” Jazz said with some certainty, not a lot but some, “When Prowl went to Ultra Magnus with what we had found he was arrested.”

Blurr stayed silent.

“We need to go to the others. I’ll explain everything on the way.”

The walk to intelligence was short but enough time to get Blurr filled in on the details of what Prowl and he had discovered. Despite having to talk in hushed tones, several times Blurr verbally purged, describing Optimus and his team on earth and what he has seen.

When they finally reached the intelligence office Cliffjumper and Getaway were waiting for them in one of the private rooms.

Finally together, and aware of the situation the three of them crowded around the small table in the plain room.

Jazz paused, placing Yokeatron's helmet down in front of them.

“So why did Optimus send this?” Cliffjumper motioned to the helmet, “It was meant for Prowl obviously.”

“So wouldn’t that mean only he would know what it means? Has it got something to do with the invasion? Megatron? The Space Bridge? Is everyone in this room forgetting Shockwave is leading Autobot intelligence?!” Blurr brought a hand up and rubbed the curvature of his helm nervously, motioning to the door with his other hand.

Getaway chimed in next, “Yeah yeah Blurr, we get it, you were fragging a Decepticon, don't get your codpiece in a twist.”

Jazz looked over the helm with interest, allowing the three others to continue bickering as usual. He missed Prowl's occasional interjection, putting a stop to the argument usually.

Was Prowl alright? The stalkades could be so harsh, especially on fewer party frames. Hopefully, because it was a real possibility with the new regulations, Prowl didn't end up at Trypticon.

Jazz shook his head, clearing his thoughts of Prowl in the prison used for Decepticon captives.

Then something caught his eye.

Something looked wrong on the helmet.

Cautiously Jazz picked up the helm and looked the thing over. Something was definitely wrong with the shape of it. If only he could figure out what.

“Jazz,” Cliffjumper asked, “What is it?”

“Something just ain’t right,” Jazz mumbled in response, his voice distant and unfocused.

“Care to explain?” Getaway asked.

“There isn’t much to stare at when ya get bored of meditating,” Jazz mumbled, “I used ta stare at Yokeatron sometimes, count his panel lines when I couldn’t focus. I assume Prowl would have done the same. There's something wrong with-”

And then he spotted it.

Brushing a servo over the dip at the back of the helm, the Autobot major could feel the uneven and awkward just out that should not have been there. Upon closer inspection he could see an awkward

solder mark there, small and almost unnoticeable.

Definitely the work of a medic.

Solder wouldn't hold like a proper weld would and with a decently strong tug with two of his digits the false paneling came off revealing a small dip in the helm.

The room went silent.

Inside the divit rested a small folded piece of organic parchment, delicately placed and barely held in place with tape. For a human the paper would have been quite large, for Jazz though, it came to be about the size of his palm when opened

Carefully, Jazz picked it up and opened it.

“What is it?” Blurr's fast question sped out.

Jazz paused for a moment, reading over the first few lines of small text.

“Instructions,” He stated, “For Prowl.”

“So this is why you’ve been ignoring me?” Bumblebee accused. With his right servo, he motioned to the cavern in front of him.

Still, in Blitzwing's arms, Bee almost gawked at what Blitzwing had put together. A single construction light lit the cavern, casting long shadows on the walls. In one corner several more blankets sat, making a large nest of sorts. On the other side of the room sat several cubes of energon along with several smaller shiny objects.

An angry Blitzwing growled back, “Do you know hard it was to find ore like that?! And soft organic materials?! Jou ungrateful-”

“Its beautiful Blitzzy, I’m just bugging ya,” Bumblebee smiled up at the Decepticon, “can you put me down now?”

Click-whir. Icy looked down at him, stoic as usual and hummed in response.

Instead of moving to the smaller mech down the larger of the two stalked towards the blankets and smoothly dropping himself down onto the plush.

Bee felt the arms around him loosen and took the opportunity to bring himself out of his vertical position into one more horizontal, partially straddling the triple changer's waist.

And suddenly bee realized he had no idea what he was doing.

At a loss, Bumblebee fumbled. Suddenly stuck in this position with the little experience he felt strikingly like a virgin again. Unable to meet the large mech’s optics, the yellow mech looked away in shame.

Tentatively, a strong digit brushed under his chin and guided his gaze back into the optics of the Decepticon. Blitzwing, stoic as ever finally allowed his EM field to was over the smaller mech. The affection, love, certainty of the field washed over Bee, hugging him close.

Slowly, Bumblebee let his own field slip. The awkward love, nervous, embarrassment of his field melded with the already tense air causing Bee to chuckle. Though awkward and uncertain it helped cut the tension slightly.

And then Blitzwing smiled softly at him and Bumblebee melted.

Eventually, Blitzwing must have realized Bee truly had no idea what he was doing and made the first move. Slowly a digit teased along Bee's chest plating, just below his windshield.

Right on top of his spark chamber.

"Woh Woh Woh, I know this is a real bonding experience and all but-"

"Did you just make a pun?" The triple-changer deadpanned, his servo stopping.

"Look Blitzbrain all I'm saying is we should just slow down a bit. Isn't there more of your weird traditions or something?" Bee laughed awkwardly.

Slowly, the digits on his chassis slid to his back, and Blitzwing cupped the small of his waist. Slowly, the large mech slid the smaller of the two up his waist and closer to his own spark housing. Bee stuttered nervously trying to find the words to say-

"If you are uncomfortable just say stop Little Bee and we will stop," Blitzwing encouraged, "There is nothing to be afraid of, why don't you set the pace, will that be more comfortable?"

Bee stuttered again, his vents hitching but this time his vocalizer cooperated, "I don't know what I'm doing, I want to. I want you. I just don't... know."

Humming his engines softly Blitzwing brought Bee's servo up to his Decepticon badge. Only then, looking closely did the yellow mech see the small seams there, indicating his spark chamber. With little more encouragement, Bee copied Blitzwing's movements from earlier, tracing over the seams teasingly.

And then the cover opened.

Pulsing wildly the spark in front of him illuminated his faceplates. For a moment Bumblebee simply didn't understand how something that small, that delicate could ever power something as large as a Decepticon. Its pale blue hue was tempting to touch but

Bee refrained from doing so, knowing just how delicate a spark could be.

Bee didn't really know when he gave the command to open his own chest plates but soon enough his own soft blue glow reflected in Blitzwing's optics.

And then they both moved forward.

And suddenly there was no line between where one of them ended and the other started. For how intense the interface had been between them, this was a whole new experience. Quiet and intimate, Bee could feel himself slipping further and further into the merge, cradled in the whirlwind of the other's spark.

Blitzwing was immense for lack of a better word. Perhaps Bumblebee hadn't put a lot of thought into how old Blitzwing was or how complex he could be but he was utterly surprised at exactly there was to the larger mech. Though the separation of his personality and his wavering loyalties stood prominently among the sea of his spark, there was something more there.

It took Bee a moment to recognize it, but eventually, the vast longing for home pushed through. Recognizable and hot, the small mech empathized. Even more, though there was a longing for stability, a partner, something solid and unwavering; Bumblebee.

And for a brief moment, Bee understood. Understood why Blitzwing loved him, and understood what the mech wanted, simply understood him.

And then it was gone.

Bee came back to himself still on top of Blitzwing. Condensation had settled on them both, reflecting their optics with a reflective sheen in the dark of the cave. The triple-changer had been the one to pull back, looking over Bee with a soft curiosity.

And then his eyes drew down lower. Bee eyes followed realizing exactly what Blitzwing had been looking at.

At some point both of their interface equipment has engaged, spikes standing at attention between them. Bee let out a small chuckle.

“Is this traditional?” Bee hummed, leaning forward.

Blitzwing's spark visibly pulsed at the words, a visible indication of his excitement.

Click-whir. And suddenly Black faceplates grinned down at him, giggling.

“Who cares?!” Blitzwing giggled. Boldly, at least for Blitzwing, his hand slide down between them, gripping their spikes together.

“Shall we?” Blitzwing's voice dropped down into a purr. His hand began trailing up and down teasingly.

“I think we shall,” Bumblebee smirked, leaning forward and planting a kiss onto his bonded's cheek.

Ratchet was happy he had insisted on sitting in on this meeting. He was also happy they had it away from the Decepticon base and instead back in his med bay back in the city.

“It's called the Matrix of leadership, it will guide you,”

Optimus observed the slightly taller mech before him, “That's it?”

“That's it,” Nova hummed, leaning casually back on his chair

Optimus visually tensed and for a moment and Ratchet could almost see the oncoming explosion. And in all honesty he expected Optimus to have had more of them lately but he had contained himself until now.

“You're fucking kidding me.”

“Language, Optimus,” Ratchet pointed out before moving to cover his audial closest to the irate leader.

“You're FUCKING kidding me!” Optimus shot up from his seated position by the door and

immediately went for his hammer.

“Where is it, what the hell are we standing around for? Let's go!” Optimus already had one foot out the door, motioning for the two mechas in the room to follow.

“It’s on Cybertron,” Nova's voice stopped the eager mech in his tracks.

“You’re a little eager there Optimus,” Ratchet chimed in, “we're not getting out of this mess that easily.”

Optimus moved back to his spot and sat in a huff, leaning the hammer back up beside him.

“So our invasion plan has to go ahead as planned,” Optimus frowned.

“You’re planning on invading Cybertron?” Nova pulled his voice back to a hush and leaned forward.

Ratchet turned his attention towards Optimus, “Are you sure we should trust him? I wouldn't put it past Sentinel to trick you like this.”

“He knows about the loops,” Optimus emphasized and returned his gaze to Nova, “because of the Decepticon invasion already planned, we’ve decided to hitch along. The plan was to access the hall of records, I think it's a quantum anomaly-”

Nova raised a hand, stopping the blue mechs, “It’s not. It's actually caused by a deity making up the core of Cybertron. What you're actually looking for is a mech by the name of Alpha Trion, the Herald, who can point you in the direction of where the Matrix is hidden. Well... at least part of it, it kind of broke the last time I saw it.”

Silence.

“That is the most Bullshit thing I've heard” Optimus deadpanned, “And I’ve dealt with a lot of bullshit.”

Nova took pause as if not exactly hearing the mech in front of him.

“I’m being serious,” Nova started, “It may not end your time loop, but the Matrix is a guiding hand, it will tell you what Primus wants from you.”

“Oh please!” This time it was Ratchet who interrupted, “Don’t tell me you still believe in that slag, there’s a reason it fazed out with the new council.”

“Believe?!” Ratchet hadn’t expected such a strong reaction but Nova almost seemed irate at the accusation, standing.

“I held the Matrix for Vorns! I almost died attempting to uphold Primus’ will! I was a Prime before... well before they made the title to mean military slag!” Nova puffed, a hand moving over the scar on his chest plates.

Ratchet took a pause. Of course he recognized this mech, but after all these years he still seemed to believe in that scrap?

Ratchet took an invent to retort but fell a few nano clicks too late.

“I’m confused,” Optimus interrupts, immediately draining the oncoming tension in the room and bringing the other two mechs back into the present.

“Prime wasn’t always a military title kid,” Ratchet starts, “Things got a bit jumbled after Nova here resigned.”

“Resigned?” Nova scoffed chiming in, “I was thrown out! Into Rodion of all places, Only half online and severely damaged!”

“You dragged us into war!” Ratchet snapped, finally getting into the underlying issue.

“I started no war! I tried to end a rebellion and when that failed, I was tossed to the streets!”

“ENOUGH!” Optimus interjected, this time with a harsher tone, “I’m confused... er still”

Optimus looked utterly lost, a far cry from his usual certain determination. Ratched pulled himself back emotionally; Nova seemingly doing the same sitting himself back down. With the tension truly broken Nova took an invent, drawing the attention of the other mechs in the room.

“Let me explain,” Nova stated, softly this time. The tension pulled from his frame, he seemed to shudder at some unknown memory.

“Primes were not always the military captains you know them to be,” Nova brought his gaze back up to Optimus, “Before Ultra Magnus took office, the lineage of Primes held leadership on Cybertron. Chosen by Primus, the deity of our people, Primes lead with absolute power with a council at their backs to inform their decisions.”

“Stop romanticizing it,” Ratchet interjected, lacking his usual spite, “It leads to the subjugation of half our populace.”

Something seemed to click in Optimus’ processor, “Nova. Nova Prime. Megatron wrote a lot about you during the first part of ‘Peaceful Tyranny’. He puts a lot of blame on you for Megazaraks fall and the escalation of the war.”

Nova seemed uncomfortable at the notion, leaning back, “When you grow up seeing a group of people a certain way it’s hard to change those ideas. I was wrong, I made a mistake and I know that now.”

Nova took a vent, changing his disposition swiftly. Ratchet recognized that look, and for a brief moment questioned the uncanny resemblance he held to Optimus.

“I lack the power now to right my wrongs, all of them, including who I chose to carry the Prime Legacy. Optimus I failed. The bare truth is I failed my people, lost the matrix and now it’s moved onto you, it’s a lot to ask of you but it’s not my choice anymore.

Primus has chosen you, though I can’t say why exactly.”

“What are you saying?”

Nova did not hesitate this time, “I’m saying Primus is calling on you to fix this. Optimus, Primus is calling you to become a Prime once again.”

“Did I ever tell you how I met Nova?”

Megatron rolled his optics, but kept his focus on the screen in front of him, “No. And I think it would be wise if you didn’t or I may kick you off this miserable planet despite the Prime's insistent

begging.”

The war Lord could hear Megazarak scoff behind him, “I don't want to be here any more than you want me to-”

“Then leave,”

“But Nova insists I try to make amends, or at least convince you of a few things, for the little Prime’s sake.”

Megatron turned around at that, facing his predecessor and squaring his shoulders, “His designation is Optimus.”

“Oh, so you can degrade him but not anyone else?” Megazarak smirked at him before motioning to the few chairs at the table.

Megatron crossed his arms and leaned against the console.

Megazarak sighed before sitting himself down and shifting the makeshift chair towards Megatron.

“When I met Nova, and I mean Nova, not the holy picture of Nova Prime, we had been on opposite sides of the rebellion for years before he had suddenly disappeared. And now suddenly I found him in Kaon, so high on syk that he tried to stab me with a

piece of rebar. He was mumbling about something he was missing, and blamed the whole situation on me,” Megazarak paused, “So I took him in.”

“I know, you brought him into my bathroom and asked me to take care of him as your second in command, I know this,” Megatron deadpanned.

Megazarak held up a hand and continued, “We got him cleaned up, he was snarky, lied constantly and held himself above us all-”

“He was insufferable,”

“And yet, imagine my surprise when I found myself curious about him. And then one night, I don't know how he got ahold of it-”

Megatron interrupted, “It was me. I wanted him to overdose and expire on your floor.”

“I don't know how he got ahold of it, but I came home to Nova completely drugged up again, spewing something about Primus wanting us to stop some great war when I got him sober he explained,”

“And you went mad. You kicked him out,” Megatron growled, “he begged you, saying he was stuck in some awful time loop-”

“You believed Optimus when he says he could tell the future,” Megazarak chided.

Something clicked with Megatron.

“You’re implying...”

Megazarak held up a hand to silence Megatron, “Let me finish my story, Nova explained what was happening, I rejected it. I rejected him, and this is the result; a four million year war and more deaths than can be counted.”

Assuming Megazarak was finished, Megatron interjected, "Where are you going with this?"

The ex-warlord paused as if to remind himself why exactly he was there, before stepping towards the defensive mech before him.

"I made a mistake. I'm asking you not to repeat it. And I understand Optimus is in better condition than Nova was, but it didn't take a genius to recognize he's glitched."

"Call him Glitched again," Megatron straightened himself, the venom of a threat deep in his voice.

Megazarak stood his ground, "He's Glitched Megatron. He kneeled before you, desperate, shaking and scared. A desperate and unneeded, fear response."

When Megatron gaped at him for a moment the older mech continued, "It wasn't the first time. I see. Megatron I'm just asking you to talk to him."

"He is not weak," The warlord growled out finally in response.

"I never said he was Megatron. Glitched; yes."

Megatron moved swiftly, bringing his face intimately close to the taller mech and bared his teeth, "Call him glitched one more time."

Megazarak seemed to resign himself, slumping his plating into a softer position, "This is not the pits anymore. You do not need to shield yourself from vulnerability and weaknesses. If you care for him, it is fine to admit that to yourself."

And Megatron laughed; a guttural noise with little humor and a lot of spite resonating in its vibrations.

"Care for him?" the Warlord finally composed himself enough to ask, and with a sudden tone change he was immediately serious, "He's useful; A strong warrior I have manipulated into my disposal. He took the Magnus Hammer from Cybertron's best warrior!"

He's not glitched, and I do not care for him!"

"Fine," Megazarak mumbled, "I simply pray he is stronger than Nova was then. I tried. I did my duty."

The large mech turned swiftly on his heels and strutted towards the exit.

Surprisingly the mountain that the Decepticon base laid under had a great view over the lake. Optimus was actually quite sad he hadn't discovered the remote spot earlier.

Optimus watched the sunrise, the pine trees around him creaking softly in the wind while echoes of Nova's conversations rang in his processor. Not to mention they would be leaving soon, back to Cybertron to release a massacre on the population...

Optimus stopped himself, cycling his vents and bringing himself back to the moment. No. This was his time to recenter, to relax.

"Prime,"

The sudden interjection of Megatron's voice startled Optimus into pivoting around on his aft. Perched on a fallen tree, Optimus reached out for the hammer beside him, throwing off his entire balance. Optimus, having surprised himself this time, ended up

falling off said tree and onto the grassy patch behind him.

HONK!

The loud startled honk Optimus let out startled several of the wildlife around them, sending bird off in a frenzied panic. From his place now awkwardly sprawled on the grass, Optimus could see the outline of Megatron in the early light.

There was a brief pause between them before the forest surrounding them came back to its quiet stillness.

And then Megatron laughed, quiet and obviously restrained but several vented chuckled seeped through the Warlord's persona.

The laugh was almost contagious. Almost.

Optimus indignantly sighed and straightened himself back up onto the log, hunching over slightly in embarrassment.

“Yes? Lord Megatron?” Optimus grumbled, “... stop laughing.”

Megatron's struggled chuckle died down somewhat but his smirk remained, “Oh come now, that was quite cute... civilian of you.”

Optimus almost bought the joyous mood, but his mind easily went elsewhere. Namely what Nova had spoken of earlier.

Optimus let the conversation die after that. For once his sour mood didn't seem to hinge on Megatron setting Optimus himself a little off balance.

“Is something wrong Prime?” Megatron questioned, drawing closer to where Optimus sat, looking over the water.

“For pit's sake Megatron!” Optimus hissed back, all but spitting at the other mech, “Enough with the nicknames! How many times have I told you my slagging name?!”

Megatron gaped at the ex-Prime, looking him over for a moment, “I take it your conversation with Nova went poorly.”

“to say it was disastrous would be an understatement,”

Megatron offered a sympathetic chuckle, “Nova and his ideas of grandeur have that effect on people. He was always so... false. More of an ideal image than a mech, Nova was the source of a lot of my frustrations; well him and Megazarak.”

Optimus scoffed, rolling his optics before responding, “Can we not talk about them? I came up here to forget everything for a few hours, not to analyze history.”

Sitting down Megatron gave a thoughtful hum besides the smaller mech. Optimus tried not to tense, the remainder of their previous... encounters still fresh in his mind's eye. When Megatron stayed quiet, Optimus could feel himself relax slightly

Silently both mechs sat looking over Lake Erie watching the sun rise slowly.

A new day, Optimus mused to himself, hopefully, it was the start of calmer waters but it was unlikely. Too many variables, what if Prowl didn't get his message? What if they didn't get the nexus closed in time-

"Your processor is running hot," Megatron hummed, turning and offering a small smirk, "I can feel you overheating from here."

Was... Megatron making a joke?

When Optimus didn't answer, instead of looking back at the warlord with optics wide, the larger mech continued.

"You know, You could always tell me what's going on you know," The words came out stiff, almost awkward, but the sentiment was there.

And for a vent Optimus wanted to tell him. Tell him, beg him to stop all this, to simply get him to Cybertron and stop the invasion. It was so foolish, so wrong. And again the Prime's mind wandered to a world where this was so much easier, where he could simply end this loop and go home.

A fool's distraction he would remind himself.

"I'm nervous is all," Optimus finally provided, "Construction will be complete within the week, and I just feel ill-prepared."

Megatron looked away and Optimus got the distinct feeling Megatron didn't totally believe his cover story.

"I see," the warlord responded, "You will be fine, stay at my side and nothing will happen to you, reign your own destruction from afar and allow the troops to do most of the damage."

"Are you offering protection?" Optimus stood, making his way to stand in front of the warlord. His shadow covered the warlord adding to the impression of his intimidation. "Why? I'm so sick of these stupid games Megatron, What do you want from me!?"

The warlord gave pause, The soft pastels of the morning reflecting on him. Though Optim's shadow covered him mostly, his expression was still open and readable.

Megatron gaped for a moment. Optimus almost moved away fearing the possible wrath of the larger mech for overstepping his bounds. That fear grew when Megatron stood, still looking slightly shocked as he brought himself closer to the smaller mech.

Optimus moved to speak, but in a sudden movement, the Decepticon's faceplates were on his own in a soft mimic of what Optimus had seen other organics do.

Megatron had leaned down and kissed him.

Chapter End Notes

Next time!!

ARC 3 THE CYBERTRON INVASION

thank you so much!! Comments and criticisms are always welcome!!

Fatal Error

Chapter Summary

With some final planning on all sides, the Nemesis and Orion arrive on Cybertron.

Chapter Notes

I'M BACK AFTER ALMOST A MONTH

HERE IT ISSS

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Impulse, as it turned out, was not Megatron's strong suit.

He had seen the organics of this wretched planet do it several times but had never truly understood the action until the night before. So what if he had been organic-watching when he was nothing but a severed head? It was completely his right to walk

around his own base unannounced. So to accidentally find his previous leader loomed over Nova, their lip plates together in a passionate lock, he had found himself confused, repulsed... and strangely curious. This... 'kiss' was absurdly foreign to the warlord.

The impulse to perform such an act was even more so.

And it had gone terribly wrong. Perhaps, Megatron thought, he should have looked into the action with a little more interest earlier. Assumably though, it required two sets of lip plates.

Megatron found himself frozen, lips pressed into a still line against Optimus' ever-closed battle mask. The metal itself was cold, so far from the warm waist he had held that night on Lockdown's ship. Megatron could not see the appeal in this act yet still could not stop feeling like he was missing something.

Still, this is not what bothered him the most.

It was a breach of the ex-Prime's boundaries. Optimus must know the meaning of the action, having been much more involved with the humans then Megatron ever had. Even though there was an obstacle physically between them Megatron knew it was the meaning that bothered the smaller mech.

Megatron pulled away after a few beats of still silence. Slowly, he took a step back to a distance in which he knows Optimus would be comfortable with.

Megatron couldn't explain why but he found himself unable to look at Optimus.

"For a moment," a small voice came from in front of him, "I thought I may have felt something genuine in your field there."

Megatron snapped his head up, looking into the small mech's optics.

Optimus glared at him, optics burning a deep shade of red. He hadn't reached for the hammer yet, which was a good sign in Megatron's book.

Optimus didn't stay quiet, speaking in a small hushed tone, "Don't touch me. How long will it take you to understand that?"

Megatron took a vent, forcing his own voice to rise in his throat, "Tell me why, let me understand-"

"You don't want to understand!" Optimus lashed back, taking a threatening step forward while his volume raised, "You want to know for your own gain! You don't think I know what you're doing!?"

"I am not attempting-"

"Yes, you are! You don't think I would find out!?"

Megatron couldn't stop the boiling at the pit of his spark, in a brash and impulsive move Megatron lashed forward, his battle programs only heightened by the swirl of still uncertain emotions deep set into him. His protocols, hardened by millions of years of battle immediately went for a visible weakness.

Heated by a frustrated passion, Megatron could only sit back as those deep-set instincts set his body into motion. Quick, even surprising himself, Megatron reached out, grabbing the chassis of the ex-Prime, wrapping his hands in a way his claw tip

deliberately dug into the awkward metal of Optimus' scars. His battle instincts rewarded him with the distinct sense of superiority, smoothing over his ego. He had expected the colorful mech to dodge after all, and being successfully sent a shot of anger aided pride down his fuel lines.

Optimus stilled in his grasp. Finally, the small mech would shut up and listen to what he had to say. Finally, he could set things straight-

Optimus thrashed suddenly, the unexpected movement only forcing Megatron's claws into the sensitive metal. The small mech took no time in becoming frantic, legs kicking out but missing Megatron's chassis. Fear and desperation shot through his EM field, viciously attacking Megatron's own plating. Optimus' eyes seemed to dart, not looking anywhere in particular, instead of looking vacant or distracted, the complete opposite of his actions otherwise.

The accomplishment once burning through Megatron froze into a deep set worry. Holding the ex-Prime tighter in an attempt to still him only seemed to propel the small mech further into his frenzy.

"NO!" Optimus screeched, his voice box ringing in an overtaxed whine, "Let go! Let go!"

With little other option at this point as it was becoming increasingly harder to hold onto the small mech, he immediately let go.

Optimus fell to the ground, clambering desperately up onto his shaking legs. He seemed to clamber for something in a fit of desperation and for a moment the warlord standing in front of him couldn't understand what he was doing. It took a moment of awkward fumbling before Megatron figured it out.

He was looking for a weapon.

But the Magnus Hammer was only five feet away-- could he not find the thing?

He's glitched.

"Calm Prime," Megatron growled a little harsher than he had meant it to.

"Calm?!" Optimus spat, "You were going to kill me!!"

"Kill you?" Megatron softened his tone slightly, "such an overreaction for a workplace accident..."

Optimus seemed to have calmed down some and took a step towards the Magnus Hammer. Once in its grasp Optimus calmed some more. Enough to at least register what the Decepticon had said.

"You think..." Optimus took a large invent, "You think these perfectly straight, perfectly lined up scars are from a workplace accident?!"

Megatron stilled, clamping his plating and vents down. Perhaps he shouldn't have assumed.

Optimus weighted himself mostly on the pole of the Hammer, and though he looked seemingly more composed his field still swirled in an anxious fear.

"You did this to me!" He screamed, his voice ringing with overuse.

Megatron took pause.

A thousand theories clambered through his processor but the most likely would be-- "A Decepticon attack," the words slipped out of his mouth.

"You're a civilian worker," the warlord argued, "you shouldn't be exposed to a battlefield! You're a civilian!"

Optimus pulled back at the louder octave Megatron reached, curling his servos tightly around the hammer.

"There isn't such thing as a civilian anymore Megatron! This!" Optimus brought a servo down to his side, barely touching himself, "This is what you promise to do to the population of Cybertron! This is what you've done to me!"

Megatron felt his spark sink. He had seen worse injuries, done worse to mechs for small infractions but this--

He couldn't understand why it bugged him so much.

The minuscule amount of composure the small mech had pulled together manifested in a stronger stance and a harsh glare.

Megatron took a moment. Yes, Optimus had confirmed it had been a Decepticon attack but had yet to confirm whom. When Megatron found out who it was, it then came down to finding the mech and punishing him properly. There. Issue solved.

"I don't see the problem here, I will handle it. You're fine Prime, relax" Megatron attempted to sooth, "I've seen worse."

Optimus went silent, looking away from the warlord. His field changed, radiating an uncertain

introspection rather than the burning fear it once had.

It was obvious to Megatron that the small mech wasn't telling him everything. Reminders from Megazarak about helping The small mech rang in his head. The Warlord allowed him a moment before continuing.

"I could handle it better given more details."

The notion made the ex-Prime stiffen again, "please leave me alone."

"I'm offering help," Megatron spat, "What is wrong with that?"

Optimus visibly shrank in on himself, frustrating the warlord further. What was he doing wrong? What did the small mech want from him?!

"It would help if you left," Optimus offered his own glare.

This was a losing battle.

Megatron flared his plating over Optimus and growled lowly. With a frustrated rumble, his engines engaged and he crouched.

The small mech had barely any time to react as the larger took off with a harsh spiral, taking off into the morning light.

1. I need you to hide the Allspark. Wait until the last minute though, or Shockwave will know something is wrong and call this whole thing off.

Blurr had to physically hold his leg still, putting a servo on it and holding it down. It looked a bit odd to have one of his servos constantly under his desk, but even worse would be the insistent vibration of his leg thrumming under his desk.

Across the desks, from him, Getaway seemed in no better condition. The white racer seemed to flex his plating and contract it as he worked. Occasionally their optics would meet and in an awkward gesture would look towards Shockwave's office nervously.

If anyone was holding it together it was Cliffjumper. The red secretary almost looked bored as the days passed. Sitting just outside Shockwave's office Cliffjumper seemed to deal with his work as usual.

When Blurr had asked him why he was so calm one day after work Cliff had simply replied, "I'm not the one who was fragging him. If he's coming after someone it's going to be the one who sucked his spine and then threw him to the cyberhounds."

That didn't make Blurr feel any better.

Blurr tried hard not to think about how many times he has let Shockwave, not Longarm, exchange a charge with him.

It made his tanks churn.

Three days.

It took three days after receiving Optimus' message for Shockwave to make his move.

Blurr supposed the spy slipping out of his office quietly and excusing himself for the afternoon was probably Shockwave's most tactical choice. If Blurr was in the same position he supposed he would have done similar. It was smart, out in the open, and simply practical.

Yet it was not enough to throw off Blurr. As the large mech exited the office he glanced to the other two mechs. Blurr stood, making his way to the door. Immediately he raised his fingers to his comm array and restrained himself.

:: Jazz. It's time.::

2. You'll need to warn high command. Make sure the crew of the Stealhaven is on Cybertron, everyone else can be called back in time. Send an emergency broadcast while Shockwave is preoccupied, you should be able to get through to the orbiting ships without him noticing.

Getaway paused at Sentinel Prime's door. His servo hovered over the entry pad as he looked over the door.

Up until now, he had stayed quiet and played along but in honesty?

This was suicide.

Whatever crazy ray Optimus had been hit with must have made its way to Jazz and the others.

Getaway dragged a digit delicately over the pad, not yet opening the door.

What could he do really? Other than warning high command? Well obviously not warn Ultra Magnus, that hadn't gone well for Prowl and he wasn't about to make that mistake twice.

Jazz had recommended Sentinel Prime. Getaway agreed.

Would he be called a hero? The whistleblower that brought not only the traitor Optimus Prime to justice but Megatron as well... would he have the opportunity to move up in the ranks? Become a Prime and have his own crew to command?

Getaway caressed the keypad again absentmindedly as he pondered.

What a good thing it was that Prowl had gotten arrested. With that creep gone the glory was all his. Perhaps he would even get the chance to run intelligence? With Longarm being a traitor and all the position was free now.

Getaway Prime.

All of the sucking up and forced smiles would be worth it now. Even having to have lunch with the idiots in his squad would be worth it if he could just climb his way up.

But--

And Getaway would admit it was a big BUT.

But Jazz was already a Major. A Major directly under the Magnus and on the fast route to becoming a Prime himself. And then there was Cliffjumper and Blurr, both highly respected in

their field.

Getaway was last on that list.

So first on the saving Cybertron list and last on the job queue.

Well, the job queue was easy enough to change.

Getaway punched in the code and entered the room confidently, catching the Prime slightly off guard.

“Sentinel Prime, there’s something I want to tell you about.”

3. We'll be coming in hot. Close the gate as soon as you see the Orion. If you don't see it, run. It's already over and we lost. The Nemesis and Orion will be first, followed by Strika's team, after that, I can't guarantee who will be next.

If Tarn and the Peaceful Tyranny make it, I'm dead.

Cliffjumper glanced nervously around the Spacebridge Nexus.

Shockwave obviously hadn't arrived yet, likely distracted by the distinct lack of All-Spark in the weapons stash (thank you Blurr) but that didn't mean he wouldn't appear at any moment.

In fact, it meant when he did arrive he was going to be likely pretty pissed. And Cliffjumper wasn't sure he was ready to deal with that.

The red mech activated his comm array.

:: Blurr?::

There was a distinct static pop after several seconds before Blurr's rushed voice came on the line.

:: Heading into the southern hemisphere now sorry can't talk if you're wondering where the Decepticon is, he's likely on his way over stay safe and stay out of sight!::

And with that, his only lifeline was gone.

Just because Blurr would likely be Shockwave's target, didn't mean he was in the clear. Far from it actually.

He could comm the others, but it was likely that they were just as busy.

Nervously, Cliffjumper returned to his console. Being the fake Prime’s secretary had come with some perks; namely having access to the codes for the Spacebridge Nexus.

Okay. ‘having the codes’ was kinda a lie. In truth he had stolen them, using Shockwave's terminal as a way to access what he needed.

Why his password was ‘high treason’, the small mech would never know. It was kinda on the nose, wasn't it...

He would ask Blurr about it later anyway. You know, if they made it even remotely made it out of this situation alive. Shockwave would be pissed. Megatron would be here, and also pissed.

Optimus could turn around and attack them...

Why were they doing this again?

Oh right. Because Jazz saw a helmet and heard some things and now suddenly he was ready to back Optimus on everything.

Cliffjumper absent mindedly dragged a servo down his face, breaking his concentration from the task at hand.

Focus. Cliffjumper reminded himself. Focus for Prowl.

The Nexus definitely hadn't been tampered with from what Cliffjumper could tell. No security breaches, not out of ordinary errors on the log and no weird Decepticon meddling.

Which was both good and concerning.

Good, because well it meant Shockwave hadn't been here yet. And bad well...

Well, why hadn't he been here yet?!

You would think that he would have prepared, tested, done something! But no... nothing; as if there was no invasion to begin at all.

Cliffjumper activated his comm array once more.

:: Jazz, I'm a little concerned.::

Bumblebee paused over his controls, looking over his shoulder to Ratchet, "Are we really doing this?"

Ratchet hummed from his seat in the command chair, looking over several diagnostics.

"No choice anymore kid," He stated, not making eye contact, "The plan is solid, Optimus has a good handle on things."

"He doesn't," Bulkhead interjected, swiveling his seat around to face the medic, "he says he does but don't think we all don't see how... how broken he is."

"Woh, Bulk that's a little harsh coming from you," Bee nervously laughed.

Ratchet sighed, running a servo down his faceplates in exasperation. Sure they hadn't really been forward with it, but the truth was obvious at this point.

Optimus had a processor glitch.

Which, in Ratchet's professional opinion, was definitely enough to cause concern. Sure the whole time loop thing may have been true but there was still something off about their leader mentally. Ratchet closed his optics and pinched the bridge of his nasal ridge. Bumblebee and Bulkhead hadn't been there on the Steelhaven when Optimus had his meltdown over attacking the Magnus. Nor had they seen him push through it.

"The nervous painting," Bulkhead glared down at the floor, averting his optics, "you saw how he

shook and panicked when Bee got hurt.”

Both mechs stared at Ratchet as if asking for reassurance.

Ratchet filled his vents, “Alright kiddos. He’s glitched. Likely a problem in the part of your processor that regulates fear response. It’s likely dangerous, and he’s also likely to make it a hell of a lot worse with this whole mission.”

“That doesn’t help!” Bumblebee squeezed out.

Ratchet crossed his arms and sat back in the command chair, glancing over at the control screen.

“Look. This plan will fail if we bail,” Ratchet rationalized, “He’s already had Prowl bail on him. And processor glitch or not we’ve gotta stop the Cons. And this is our best bet.”

Bulkhead looked down again, wrinkling his optical ridges.

“Bulkhead,” Bumblebee chimed in, gaining the mechs attention.

Bulkhead looked up, meeting the gaze of the smaller mech. Bumblebee’s optics burned, a look so unfamiliar to Bulkhead he was almost taken aback. The small mech smirked, standing.

“Isn’t this what we wanted? To be heroes? Well if it’s anything I’ve learned lately is that being the hero is a shitty job!” Bee proudly put his hands on his hips.

Ratchet brought his palm to his face once again, “Enough, can we leave the shitty speeches to Optimus from now on? When the hell have you ever done anything heroic?”

Bee looked as if Ratchet had smacked him.

“I almost got eaten alive by a scraplet!” Bumble yelled.

Ratchet rolled his optics, “Trying to investigate a noise on a ship. Not heroic.”

Bumblebee clenched his fists and stamped a foot. Ratchet took a moment to smirk at his resemblance to a human toddler but only for a moment, as Bee’s tone took a drastic shift to a quiet concern.

“Optimus has been pretty pissed lately,” Bumblebee mumbled.

“If there’s one thing we can count on Bossbot for its protecting us,” Bulkhead added.

Ratchet hummed, returning his attention to the screen in front of him, the two mechs seemingly content with his explanation, “He was bound to be angry finding out Megatron was going to betray us.”

“It’s a bit hypocritical...”

Ratchet growled out more harshly than he meant to, “There’s a difference. Megatron is betraying Optimus on a personal level, going after something because he can. Optimus is betraying Megatron because he needs to.”

The two in front of him quieted down after that, focusing on getting everything in order to take off.

Soon.

Ratchet reminded himself.

This will be over soon.

4. Ask Jazz for help. He's a good mech. He's helped me before. I'm sorry.

And thank you.

Jazz glanced one more time down at the paper in his servo. The four instructions were vague, leaving little detail for them to work with. But it was enough to at least get organized. Jazz wondered if perhaps Prowl would have found a new meaning to them.

Or perhaps would have known things he hadn't but even that was a stretch.

In his other servo, held with a fond grasp sat Yoketron's helmet. Grasping the helm brought little comfort to the major. Reading the datapad Optimus had left confirmed it's relevance to Prowl who had worn the armor several times.

Jazz knew he should have been jealous but the reminder of Prowl only made his spark clench.

Only taking the briefest of pauses to look over the available files on Prowl's arrest provided little to no explanation on where the mech had been sent.

Jazz was starting to suspect that there was a reason why that information was being hidden.

A malicious reason.

:: Mission complete Jazz:: Getaway's voice came through their shared comm. channel.

Right. He had to focus. Prowl would have to wait until Optimus was here to help.

:: And Sentinel?:: Jazz inquired.

:: Wouldn't pass up the chance to screw over Optimus so it looks like we have at least part of high command on our side, even if we are secretly going to fuck all of Cybertron up:: Getaway responded, monotone.

:: Alright. Head to the Nexus. Cliffjumper?::

There was a soft pop as the secretary came into the channel:: I'm set here. Still no sign of the one opticed atrocity though. I'm starting to worry::

Jazz sighed. Between high command and Shockwave's disappearing act, something wasn't right.

:: Standby. Getaway is on his way over, and I will be too. Blurr?::

With another small pop, the speedster came on In A flurry of words.

:: Just hitting Kaon but I think I should go further with the Allspark since I really haven't seen Shockwave and at this point, I'm quite concerned if you guys haven't seen him either::

Jazz furrowed his brow, bowing his visor in the process.

Something wasn't adding up.

It was possible he was hiding somewhere and waiting until the last moment to strike, but even him moving now meant they were already into the final stretch. Shockwave, at least in Longarm form should be at the Nexus.

:: I'll be at the Nexus in 10 clicks. Wait for me:: and with that Jazz transformed, speeding out of his office with an urgent whine of his wheels.

"What do you mean you're not coming?!" Optimus hissed, his nerves still on edge his encounter only days before.

Nova stood his ground, taking a firm stance against the slightly taller mech.

"I mean I'm not coming along. Neither Megazarak nor I will be."

From the back corner of the factory there was an audible grunt, no doubt the war machine agreeing with his small Prime.

Optimus squeezed his optics closed. He didn't even know what this Matrix looked like let alone where to find Alpha Trion so he could find the damn thing.

"You've been looking for me for three hundred years only to tell me to go find some god-bobble?" Optimus hissed through gritted teeth, "Three hundred years to deliver a message? Are you insane?!"

"Quite," The baritone voice of Megazarak rose from the other room, "not to bring up the fact you made the entire situation more difficult by not simply getting arrested when we had wanted you to."

Nova snapped around, hissing in that direction, "Zarak- enough."

"No, no, no," Optimus encouraged, "Please don't tell me you were behind the Steelhaven incident."

Nova visibly shrunk before him, his plating flattening against himself. Shoulders pulled in close he turned, facing Optimus and smiling nervously.

Megazarak lumbered into the room from his place in the back of the factory. Looking distinctly deadpan the warframe shrugged in the doorway, still half-crouched.

"I can't believe it! You two sent that third report!" Optimus yelled, drawing the attention of the others in the base.

Ratchet popped out of the med-bay, grumbling something about the noise. Bulkhead shuffled out of his room curiously gazing at the others.

Note to self Prime thought to himself, find out where Bumblebee has been going off to these last few days.

Megazarak smirked, the first real emotion other than indifference the ex-Prime had seen.

Megazarak chuffed, "Imagine our surprise when we didn't find you aboard the Steelhaven."

The blue and red mech rubbed his comm array before letting out an exasperated huff.

“You know what? Fine. That’s fine. Stay here on earth. I’ll manage. I always do.”

“Prime.”

“Lord Megatron.”

“Is your team prepared?” Megatron asked, his eyes focused on the completed Spacebridge.

Optimus held a similar gaze, unyielding and stern. He wouldn’t admit it aloud, but the forced stasis had done wonders for his nerves, steadying him in front of Megatron. Though it didn’t remove the panic completely, it was much quieter.

It only took a short comm to Ratchet to confirm that yes, the Orion was prepared and everyone had boarded safely. Optimus only gave a curt nod to Megatron in response, not really giving much more in response.

If Megatron actually looked at Optimus, he wouldn’t have noticed. There was too much to think about now, too much on the line to show the smallest inclination of weakness.

“Shall we board then?” Megatron hummed, turning towards the repairs Nemesis behind them.

It must have been what Lugnut and Blackaracnia were up to when not watching them. Turning Optimus could see the major repairs done to the ship, yet it looked stable enough.

“Yes my Lord,” Optimus responded blankly. At a point Optimus realized it would probably be obvious he was upset but was uninterested in the false pretenses today. There was too much else to focus on.

Megatron paused, as if to say something but thought better of it, and proceeded towards the ship, arms tucked neatly behind him. After his own moment of hesitation Optimus followed, curbing the boiling pressure forming in his spark.

Rage had its time and place. The current situation provided neither criteria and such Optimus followed the warlord onto the ship.

Soon, he reminded himself.

Soon.

The bridge was quiet when they reached it. Starscream and Blitzwing sat quietly at their own console, not entirely acknowledging their entrance. Blackaracnia and Lugnut seemed to loiter around the room, straightening as Megatron entered and took his own seat.

Perhaps if he were not as livid as he was now, Optimus might have struggled to find his own place to stand. Now though, with more purpose set in his spark that he had in a long time, Optimus found himself standing directly behind Megatron. The small mech paid no mind to the exact details as the rest of them prepared to take off, Coordinates were rushed out between them, messages sent to the Orion’s main console. It became harder and harder to focus, the rage still gnawing at his spark.

Rage? Aided anxiety? A swirl of both was more likely than not.

The ship jerked. Reaching out a hand Optimus steadied himself on Megatron’s command chair, earning him a five opticed glare from Lugnut. With no focus to expand on appearances, Optimus

rolled his eyes and removed his hand from the chair, instead balancing himself on the hammer.

Fucking Decepticons.

The Spacebridge, visible out the large Deck windows and the several monitoring screens, flickered to life, casting an awkward blue glow over the purple ship. The monstrosity of meshed metal seemingly worked fine, much to Optimus' delayed disappointment.

The Nemesis lurched again. With its jerky motions came the distinct smell of something burning, though not overly worrisome it spoke to newness of the engine repairs.

:: We're set for your grand escape:: Bumblebee confirmed over the comms from the Orion.

Optimus glanced over to the Orion. The ship idled gracefully out the port side; a beacon of familiarity amidst the surrounding chaos.

Optimus didn't respond to the comm. The Orion knew he was ready. All there was left now to do was wait.

The Nemesis advanced forward.

"Are we ready to incur the Decepticon wrath on Cybertron?" Starscream chided.

No one responded.

In fact, if Optimus was looking close enough it almost seemed like Megatron tensed at the thought.

They progressed slowly into the uncertainty of the bridge. For a moment the familiar bright blue of warping overtook them, wrapping the ship in a cool hue.

And then Cybertron came into view.

Optimus' spark dropped.

What came into view was utterly foreign to him. Not basked in the Patellian blues of the northern skies, the city below the ship bathed mostly in a deep brown. Though parts of it had seemingly been rebuilt most of the city seemed rusted, broken and forgotten.

Optimus had never bothered keeping Cybertronian time. Both moons hung heavy in the sky, casting long shadows from the structures around them.

They had arrived at a spaceport. The entire city was really only used for shipping to and from colonies, and a few prisons here and there.

This wasn't the Spacebridge Nexus... this was...

"Welcome home oh glorious Megatron!" Lugnut yelled from somewhere on the deck.

This was Kaon.

I may not respond right away but your comments really do help!

Thank you all!!

Next time;

The plan changes.

Sentinel Prime is a Dick.

Chapter Summary

As the Invasion comes to a head, mechs are forced to take sides. What sides they pick are entirely up to their personal motivations.

Chapter Notes

Its DONE EARLIER THAN USUAL
TA DA
I LOVE MYSELF BUT Y"ALL GONNA HATE ME HAHA
[hey there DND group... I'm working on those mods I promise....]

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

One simple mistake. So easily rectified. He should have listened closer during take off. Then maybe he would have noticed the change.

Kaon was a scar on Cybertron's surface; a reminder of the worst of the war; rusted and half falling apart. The only new sections or even really the only ones repaired were shipping docks and Trypticon. Both areas made the skyline even more ridiculous as they emerged as if unannounced out from the decrepit state of the rest of the city.

The only mech stationed here would be guards for the prison and civilian pilots or dock workers.

Optimus internationally cringed, he would be the reason these mechs died.

This was his fault.

The spaceport wasn't as large as the Nexus. Spanning only five bridges the Decepticon attack would be significantly slowed, but what they lost in speed they gained in surprise, at least with Optimus.

This was Megatron's safety net. Without Optimus knowing *where* they were going to attack he could not prepare.

There was a commotion below them as workers seemed to realize what and who exactly burst through the bridge.

And the Nemesis fired.

Blitzwing and Starscream hunched over their controls monitoring weapon systems, attacking anything moving in order to prevent alarms from being sent.

To his left another ship breached into Kaon, bringing with it a wave of nausea in his spark. The new ship followed suit, firing into the docks below as well.

Ratchet's voice came through on his comms, loud, clear, but a bit weary,

:: Optimus. Are we still doing this?:

Optimus turned away from Megatron's chair, taking a defiant step towards the exit of the command deck.

“Prime? Where are you going?” Megatron's voice sent a cool chill into his leg struts, pausing his exit.

The small mech stayed quiet for a moment, not looking back, “Would you have me watch?”

“Pardon?”

Turning, Optimus snapped, “Would you have me watch your genocide? Would you have me stay and watch you slaughter civilians? Because you decided *Kaon*, a port city was more convenient than the Nexus?”

Megatron looked away, glancing down below before turning his gaze back to Optimus, “This was preventative. I couldn't have a certain ex-Autobot warning his previous Commander could I?”

Optimus hissed, gritting his teeth together, “I don't care why you have done this Megatron. I only care if I have to watch it or not. And trust me,” he spat, “I know exactly what my hand in all of this is, I know what I've done. I know what I'm going to do. Do you?”

Instinctively, Optimus' hand went to his side covering one of his scars.

“You don't. Whatever attempt this is to rectify whatever problem you've manifested in that... that thick helm of yours is mute! Mute because whoever you're trying to prove it to will be dead! And surely. Surely you don't believe you'll have my support after this! I know Megatron. I know that you plan to do to them. To Bumblebee. To Ratchet. To Bulkhead. To you, this is some necessary action. To curb me towards you. How insane are you to believe that would work? What message would it prove if they are dead! I wouldn't be far behind them!”

Huffing, Optimus Turned away once again, calming his hectic field. This was too much-- this was too much to handle he couldn't control-

“This is pointless Megatron, *my Lord*. Whatever functionalism or, or... whatever you want to demolish this time. Is it worth this? Genocide?”

His field raged, his previous attempt at calming it failing.

Venting heavily, no one on the deck spoke. After a few moments of dead silence save for the echoes of gunfire, Optimus continued.

“I will be waiting in the landing bay for your orders.”

Optimus advances through the door and out into the dark halls of the Nemesis.

:: Optimus?!::

:: Sorry Ratchet:: His voice is unsteady,:: The plan has changed. I simply need a moment. I will figure something out.::

The walls of the Nemesis seemed to creep in on him as he walked. He ignored it.

:: Are you venting?: Ratchet's voice took a new tone, calming and stern.

Optimus cycled his vents and the walls seemed to still around him.

:: Yes Ratchet. Thank you.::

:: Where are you? What is our goal?: Ratchet encourages.

By now Optimus had hit the lower decks of the ship, winding his way down to landing bay. The darkness still crept in and around him.

:: The lower decks. For now, I simply want to stop what we started. The Matrix can and will wait until we stop the fighting.::

The tap of the Magnus Hammer as he walked grounded him. Opening the channel to Bulkhead and Bumblebee Optimus continued.

:: We move forward as planned. Position the Orion in three clicks and be ready. Megatron likely already suspects something as our last conversation was... poorly thought out on my part.::

Finally. The landing bay. Dark like most of the ship the landing bay held very little; A small access to a weapon stash and a large set of bay doors.

Two clicks left.

A sudden rock of the ship signaled the first signs of Cybertron's response. Though only a small jolt it was likely the largest weapon Kaon still held, and it was likely civilian wielded. Optimus took a small vent again. This was not the time nor the place to falter.

“...Optimus?”

:: Optimus?:

The small mech pivoted around only to find himself no longer alone in the landing bay.

Standing stoically in the entrance Blitzwing stood in the shadows of the hallway as if too cautious to approach. His quiet voice melded with the urgency of Ratchet's over the comm, distracting the small mech from both questioning mechs.

Ratchet spoke first,:: Small problem. Megatron's shooting anything in range and we can't get close enough--::

Click-whir. Red glowing eyes and a cackling smile shone through the darkness, lighting both mechs up.

Stay calm. Optimus reminded himself. Other than his outburst he hadn't done anything really wrong. He was fine-- he could pull this off--

Blitzwing advanced, laughing in an odd tone that Optimus couldn't quite place.

“Lieutenant Blitzwing,” he forced out, “I thought you were managing the weapon systems.”

“HaHa! No time to explain Mr. Man with a plan! 5 Optics is already on his way!” Blitzwing chimed and moved forward faster.

Optimus backed up trying to turn toward the door but acted too late. In a flurry of motion,

Blitzwing caught up, clumsily grabbing Optimus in a servo and hitting the bay doors with the other.

The suction of air seemed to be a shock for both mech's. Aided by Blitzwing's clumsy approach, the air pressure caught Optimus ripping him from the triple changer's grasp and into the open air.

Heading into a tailspin immediately, Optimus tried to straighten himself, falling back into his experience with his jetpack. The wind was almost painful as it pulled on his awkwardly flared plating. Any panicked attempt to slow himself only quickened his tailspin only becoming more and more painful.

And suddenly it stopped. Cringing at the sudden change of direction, Optimus took a vent, several alerts clouding his internal display. For a moment, only briefly, Optimus couldn't figure out what happened.

And then he realized Blitzwing had caught him. The Triple changer was still laughing; this time hollering like he had won the lottery. Optimus thrashed for only a moment as the larger mech squeezed in warning. The warning seemed to do its trick though and Optimus paused just long enough to realize where they were headed.

The Orion.

The bay doors were wide open, ready to catch both him and the incoming Decepticon. In the bay Bumblebee proudly stood, watching at the incoming tangle of mechs' approach. Though hard to see from this angle, Sumdac's package sat beside him.

All too soon Blitzwing drove into the bay, barely slowing down to land, instead crashing into the far wall.

Optimus' head spin for several clicks. In the vagueness of his processor, he recognized Blitzwing peeling off of him, leaving way for Bumblebee to come clambering over, getting him into an upright position. Next came Ratchet but the vertigo prevented Optimus from hearing what he was yelling about. Bumblebee screamed something back, unintelligible in his current state.

As his senses returned he could feel the pressure of something at his back. Large servos, assumably Bulkhead's, strapped Sumdac's jetpack to his back, continuing on with the plan.

And then the sound around him came back into focus.

Explosions from heavy fire on the ground below. Ratchet, Bumblebee and an angry Blitzwing all screaming.

"I CALLED FOR HELP!" Bumblebee shrill voice bit through the haze.

"I KNEW YOU TWO WERE UP TO SOMETHING! A DECEPTICON! YOU GOT HELP FROM A GLITCHED DECEPTICON?!" Ratchet.

"CALL ME GLITCHED AGAIN AUTO-SCUM!!" Definitely Blitzwing.

Optimus focused, tapping the hammer, causing a loud clash of thunder to ring out. Immediately the arguing stopped.

"The spacebridges are our first target. Without Prowl to shut them down, destruction is our only option. None of us have the access codes. that means no reinforcements. I guarantee Megatron is already on his way! No time for questions and no time for arguing!"

Oh, God. He was shaking. Optimus could feel it in his knees, he could feel the anxiety slowly seeping in--

“Blitzwing! You’re with me! Bulkhead, Ratchet, Bumblebee! Take the Orion and head for the furthest bridge! Is that clear?!” Optimus commanded, sounding distinctly better than he felt.

A round of ‘Yes Optimus sir!’ calmed his spark marginally.

Time to stop a massacre.

Optimus was in and out of the Orion in a matter of earth minutes. Suited up with Sumdac's jetpack (which Bumblebee had both delivered the blueprints for and received) and the Magnus hammer Optimus was off again after a few words from Ratchet about venting properly and keeping on the comm line.

Once he was off, the medic's attention turned towards Bee.

“You have some nerve bringing a Decepticon in to help--”

“Sorry Old mech!” Bumblebee chimed, already backpedaling towards Blitzwing near the bay doors, “Too many explosions! Can’t hear you over the explosions!”

Blitzwing leaned down, waiting for the smaller mech to jump up. Gracefully Bumblebee climbed up the triple changer's treads and on to his back.

Ratchet leaped forward, attempting to pull back the small mech but missed as Blitzwing lurched forward and out of the ship.

Bumblebee settled into some of Blitzwing's back kibble as they dove. Bee summed it up to the bond, whatever it had done it had given him some awareness of Blitzwing. Unlike their first flight Bumblebee flexed and contracted his plating as Blitzwing moved; matching the triple changer's dips and darts as they avoided gunfire.

Flying felt amazing this way. Working together like this he felt as if they melded into one mech, hyper-aware of one another to the point Bee lost himself in the sensation of their flight. It felt like they were creating music; separate entities, separate sounds coming together to act as one product.

The bullet and Laser fire around them only added to the rush as they approached the closest Spacebridge.

Blitzwing laughed manically under him before the joyous laughter strung into words, “Oh hello pretty birdies!”

The faint feeling of Blitzwing in Bumblebee's spark turned into a swirl of fearful excitement was all the warning he received before a shot whizzed over Bee’s head.

Swinging around and re-anchoring himself on the Decepticon revealed rotary and another seeker on their tail, gaining on them fast.

“Handle the flying and what’s in front of us!” Bee called over the air around them, “I’ve got dumb and dumber!”

Bee engaged his stingers. Locking his legs into Blitzwing's side the bright yellow mech started

shooting.

:: We've got two ships through the bridges! A third one breaching now! Let's get this shit shut down!:: Optimus came loud and clear over the comms followed by a:: Still No sign of Megatron!::

Bumblebee's shots did little but skit off the 'cons plating, only slowing them slightly.

“Uh?! Big guy?! Small problem!” Bee yelled.

Blitzwing cackled in response, dipping and dodging more frantically, several times he made a motion to try and flip over but aborted them suddenly.

“Trust me!” was the only warning the smaller mech had.

Suddenly Blitzwing shifted his kibble, releasing Bee's safe perch on his back and turned, flipping onto his back in the air. For a brief moment, Bumblebee felt like he was falling, only to be grabbed by a large servo and dragged onto the triple changer's stomach plating.

The contrast of Bee own terrified spark pulse and Blitzwing's calm determination almost made the small mech nauseous, only aided by the sudden movement. With no time to adjust Blitzwing flipped back onto his stomach, bringing Bee out of the range of fire.

Blitzwing laughed crazily, over Bee's own screams. Blitzwing started slowing, taking a direct hit to his thicker back plating.

“BLITZBUTT!!” bee screamed, Finally taking the time to Look forward. Blitzwing continued forward, straight towards one of the bridges.

Without much time to think Bumblebee was let down, and the forward thrust from the Decepticon above him propelled him square into one of the pillars of the bridge.

He landed smack against it while Blitzwing took off leading the other Decepticons away. The small mech caught his pedes on a small ledge of metal, wobbling slightly before balancing himself. Bumblebee tried not to think about how high up he was, nor that battle raging around him, instead, he felt around him for an access panel.

Time to take this down from the inside.

His body was already strained. The power of his jetpack rerouted for flight made him feel groggy. The amount of swinging and blasting he had to do with the Magnus Hammer made his joints complain with a lasting throb up both arms.

Strika was still close behind him on the ground while Lugnut kept close in the air. Occasionally, if he turned quickly enough he could catch a small glimpse of Cyclonus following for a much safer distance.

Bellow him other Decepticons went to work securing the port, small teams that had arrived started spreading out into the city.

Another swing, arching his back awkwardly to shift with the jetpack, aiming squarely at Lugnut. At the same moment, both Decepticons fired at him, colliding with the electric charge too close to Optimus for comfort. The heat from the explosions licked at his pedes as he turned back onto his

stomach and a much more comfortable flying position. He couldn't do this for much longer.

Two out of five space-bridges we're down thanks to the Orion and the Magnus hammer, but now more Decepticons we're through it was much harder to get solid hits on the structures.

And then there was the problem of Bumblebee and Blitzwing-

BANG. Another shot, even closer this time. Focus, he had to focus.

Attempting to lean himself back into range of the third Spacebridge only brought him closer to Lugnut but he needed to make another shot, the Decepticons we're already progressing and he didn't have time to-

Lugnut pulled back and at the same time that Strika slowed. That could only mean one thing.

For a click, he held his course towards the bridge. He strained his audials to hear for a specific engine hum.

Quickly and suddenly he darted to the other side in the air, narrowly missing a large swipe from a very familiar sword. Slowing, Optimus brought himself into an upright position facing his attacker.

Megatron floated upright in front of him. In one hand the sword that pierced his chassis on three separate occasions. In the other, aimed directly at him was the warlord's fusion cannon.

Optimus stayed perfectly still.

"You've turned against both Decepticon and Autobots alike. Where are you planning to go?" Megatron growled, "Your medic, the small yellow one, the green one. *Where are you planning to go?*"

His plating was flared in violent promise, the hum of his fusion cannon more of an implication rather than an actual attack. But something else dragged Optimus' attention away.

Over the warlord's shoulder, the dull blue light of the space bridge flickered before completely going out, dragging the warlord's attention behind him.

Out of the almost unnoticeable exit, a familiar yellow mech crawled out.

Huh. So Bee had been paying enough attention to at least wreck the inside of one of those things.

Three down and two to go.

Megatron was looking away from him, and with a new burst of determination Optimus went for his opening.

Optimus charged, the load of the hammer swinging back and to his right as he came upon the Decepticon. Megatron wasn't completely oblivious though, and as Optimus swung up on to him he turned gracefully, increasing the power of his thrusters and met his sword to the pole of the Magnus Hammer. Optimus released it's building charge, allowing a cascade of blue-tinged lighting free to cling to the grounded metal around them. There was a few beats of silence, both mechs putting an increasing pressure on their weapons before finally, the crashing sound of Thunder caught up to them. Loud and invasive the noise itself seemed to shake the air around them, still both held firm glaring bright red optics at the other.

“All bark and no bite little Prime?” Megatron spat. Shifting his shoulder plating gracefully, for the record Optimus would insist he wasn't staring; the warlord brought one arm off his own sword and up onto the pole of Optimus' weapon. The telltale sound of thrusters grew suddenly louder and Megatron took off, pulling Optimus up with him.

“You don't understand Megatron! Not that I would expect a genocidal tyrant like you could!” Optimus engaged his own thrusters, keeping pace with the warlord. Exchanging blows the two became entangled, and several times to they separated, only to come crashing back into each other.

It felt vaguely familiar. Despite the new dull aches that joined his usual ones the fight felt more like dancing than a brutal assault.

Optimus got a solid kick into Megatron's side, separating them once more and giving him the altitude advantage. Arching his back and stiffening the smaller mech dove again, charging his Hammer and pushing his thrusters to their limit.

They met again; sword clashed against Hammer, free servos went in for any possible opening. Megatron landed a swing to his left shoulder and Optimus grunted loudly. Several new errors filled his queue, only cluttering his internal HUD further than usual.

::Prime!::

Ratchet's voice rang in his processor but before he had the chance to answer Bulkhead chimed in on the comms.

::We're taking heavy fire and we can't hold on much longer!::

He rang his processor for a moment, organizing his thought process. Blocking another hit from Megatron Optimus finally answered.

:: Bumblebee! Where are you and Blitzwing?::

As if right on cue a large Shadow overcast their battle for a brief moment, out of the corner of his optics Bumblebee bright yellow plating stuck out against Blitzwing's tan body.

::Here Bossbot!::

::Get over to the Orion Ratchet needs your- Huhg!::

Optimus cutting off suddenly, taking a violent slash to the side of his leg. The pain seared up his side and the warm drizzle of energon almost dried instantly against the harsh winds of his flight path. He caught the next blow against the hilt of the hammer, refocusing in front of him.

::We need to retreat Optimus!:: Ratchet's voice cut through again, this time slightly less urgent. ::We're completely swarmed, there is only more on the way. We need to cut our losses, now!::

::I can't::

::WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU CAN'T?!::

Optimus visibly winced.

Megatron, pressed ironically close to him, offered a confused hum in response, “Problem Prime?”

Optimus unhooked their weapons, pulling their upper bodies apart just enough to fill his vents with cool air once again.

“You’re the only problem here Megatron.”

Megatron lashed out, wrapping his servo around Optimus’ own on the hammer’s handle.

“Only if you make me out to be one. And still you have yet to answer my question Optimus,” Megatron pulled back, arching into a downward spiral.

Vertigo disrupted Optimus’ equilibrium sensors. Mustering up his vocalizer took some effort but eventually, he overcame the wind around them, “Perhaps If you weren’t a genocidal maniac--”

His mind to clouded between the current condition of the Orion and Megatron Optimus didn’t know impact was imminent until Megatron tossed him away, pulling up immediately. The smaller mech, on the other hand, crashed violently into the ground. Temporarily, his processor glitched and Optimus found himself among the debris of his crash site several seconds later. Rust fragments around him clouded around him. Pulling himself up and onto his knees, he ignored the new errors cramming on his display.

Vaguely, past the dust in front of him, the shadow of a very familiar pain in his ass emerged.

“Don’t see that you’re losing?” Megatron rasped, stalking further forward.

Optimus tried to ignore the corpse of a dock worker, too close for his own comfort.

“I’ve been losing for the last *three hundred years*,” Optimus opened his battle mask, spitting a wad of energon to clear his vocalizer, “If that is supposed to deter me from shoving a hammer up your or any ancient deities aft you are sorely mistaken.”

Megatron raised another optical ridge in confusion and Optimus took his opening, charging forward again.

Megatron easily blocked the febal attack but did not retaliate. Optimus staggered past him, weak sparks splaying from where his hands stuck to the hammer.

“You once told me you had no problems taking me down,” Megatron stalked around him.

“I still don’t,” Optimus snapped. To which he didn’t. Taking him down and an entire army on the other servo...

“You are a suicidal fool,” Megatron landed in growling in a deep threatening tone, “The Decepticon victory is on the horizon and you choose to go rogue. You and that traitor Blitzwing.”

Optimus turned, swinging once again lazily completely missing his target.

“The Decepticon massacre yo mean,” Optimus snarled, his teeth on full display, “Where is the shining revolutionary from the beginning of ‘Towards peace’? The small poet joining Megazarak for the pure hope of ”redefining a civilization?”

Megatron came closer, spitting his words like venom, “So you did read my memoir. He died after protestors got shot. He died after any civilian joining him was forced into a mangled frame. He died when he understood it was his responsibility to right these wrongs.”

Optimus redirected the charge of the hammer through his chassis and shot an arm out into the delicate seems lining Megatron sides.

Megatron screamed, a loud and grating shriek that grated on Optimus’ audials. Optimus pulled

back and swung with the hammer this time. Directly hitting Megatron in the middle of his chassis the smaller mech let out another powerful wave of electricity causing the larger mech to go silent; his mouth opened in a silent scream.

Optimus pulled back.

Megatron collapsed onto one knee, coming slightly almost eye to eye with the ex-Prime.

“A responsibility to *half* the population Megatron? The rest of us owe you our lives?” Optimus only spoke above a whisper, taking one more step than was smart towards the warlord, “Your cause excuses murdering those who simply want to survive.”

Optimus was delicate as he laid a hand on Megatron’s servo. Closing his hand softly around Megatron’s fist and sword, he raised the weapon slowly. It was a bold move but perhaps if he could get the warlord to understand...

Slowly, as if guiding a human hand Optimus guided Megatron’s sword up and against the scar on his left side.

Megatron scowled for a moment. Balancing on his knee and other arm Optimus could feel the residual charge from the Warlords frame. There was a beat around them, gunfire coming once again dangerously close to them both.

And then Megatron understood.

The seemingly permanent anger behind the Decepticon’s optics softened into something resembling understanding or perhaps guilt. The blazing heat in his optics toned down to a more pale amber staring at the sword as if it had offended him in some way.

Optimus’ anxiety radiated from where the tip of the sword met his scar but he held firm.

The Decepticon wrenched back, surprise obvious on his faceplates. His EM field betrayed him, letting out a surprised and hurt wave that wrapped around them both.

Megatron opened his mouth to speak again--

BANG.

In the distance another explosion went off, dragging both of their attention out to the city limits. Smoke rose from one of the newer parts of the city, too far for it to be a Decepticon attack but close enough to not be entirely coincidental.

“What have you done Megatron?” Optimus questioned, pulling the hammer to his side while running a diagnostic on his jet pack running in the back of his helm.

Megatron rose. For a brief click, his hand twitched awkwardly on the hilt of his sword. Eventually, he responded.

“Freeing my people.”

In the distance, a cloud seemed to form out of the mouth of the explosion. The dark of the Cybertronian night forced the oncoming swarm of mechs into one mass. The mass shifted, heading in their direction.

Optimus took a step back, engaging the thrusters in his jetpack.

Trypticon. Megatron had freed what Decepticons the Elite guard had captured, almost doubling the Deceptions now on Cybertron.

They had lost.

::Retreat:: Optimus sputtered into the comms; desperate and dazed, ::Pull into the North of the city. We'll see how far north we can get before we hit a blockade--::

Something caught Optimus' eye.

Vibrant among the mass of purple a single blue, teal, purple, *rainbowed* dot pushed forward, spewing what seemed to be an unstable exhaust flame behind them. It travelled almost double what the others did; barrelling towards them.

Optimus strained his optics, zooming in as best as he could towards the hurdling mass. Vaguely he could see three separate mechs. The first and largest looked like a patchwork of other mechs, armour splaying over one another and melding together to form one mech. The second mech, a teal bot clung to the larger's pede, holding on as the larger propelled them forward. The third on the other hand sat on the largests back, his black and gold plating a stark contrast to the rainbow beneath him.

"Prowl...?" Optimus mumbled under his breath.

"You know that projectile?" Megatron said, rolling his shoulders.

Optimus charged his hammer up.

::We hold:: Optimus commanded into the comms, ::We hold until we have Prowl::

Jazz watched the fray on screen. Reports form both the docks and Trypticon enveloped his console screen. Yet still, Jazz couldn't do anything.

Despite a small conversation Optimus and Megatron seemed to re-engage after Trypticon burst open, a new furiosity enveloping the ex Prime for some reason. Static took over the video feed for a moment as Optimus unleashed another burst of electricity clearing only to reveal Megatron gaining the upper hand landing a hit to the mechs side.

The Steelhaven bustled around him. From the command chair, Ultra Magnus barked orders, snapping at anyone out of line. Sentinel barked at the screen behind him, ordering mechs to the Nexus.

The Steelhaven itself hovered over Rodion ominously. A border city during the war Rodion and its neighboring cities provided an already stable infrastructure for a barricade. Getaways tip may have not have prevented the invasion but it had given them time to prepare- and in turn, call basic forces back to Cybertron. With any luck, they could squash this attack here and now.

Jazz could think through the logistics of the situation with ease. Perhaps not with the attention to detail Prowl had displayed before his arrest but definitely enough to report to his superior officers of the likely next steps of their enemies.

Attacking the Nexus would have provided the 'cons with a swift and decisive victory over the capital, pushing survivors into the colony planets. At least Optimus had slowed their attack by

forcing it on Kaon, a city with little advantage except for its shipping docks.

“It provides a good ship dock and repair base,” Jazz rationalized to Cliffjumper.

“It’s got a lot of smaller shipping docs,” the red mech replied over the video feed on his console, “It’s entirely possible he’s sandwiched himself between us and the colonies, Question is where he’s going to attack first after this scuffle is over.”

Jazz would have been happy for the red mech’s abrupt promotion to acting Prime for intelligence had it not been because of Shockwave’s betrayal.

Cliff continued, “Drone’s haven’t picked up any visual feed from Trypticon. I can get you more information on that front when I get a team into there. Right now it would be safe to assume The entire Decepticon populace has escaped. In short, Megatron has likely doubled his forces on Cybertron and they continue to grow.”

Jazz glanced around him for a brief click before leaning into his screen , “What a time to lose contact with Blurr huh?”

Cliffjumper let his facade slip for a moment, his concerned look accentuating the dark circles under his optics, “I’m worried Jazz.”

“Optimus is holding out,” Jazz pulls back, falling back into a more professional tone. Still, he tried to assure the mech on the other side of the screen, “With any luck Optimus will take down the Warlord and then we can bring the wayward Prime in.”

He’ll be killed. Jazz didn’t say the truth out loud but it still rang between the two of them , *There’s no chance in pit they’ll bring him in alive even if they do find him functioning in the middle of all those Decepticons.*

They were down to the three of them, counting Optimus’ team that made them a total of seven. Seven of them playing both sides to obtain a goal Jazz didn’t even know yet. If only he could make contact with Optimus...

Not that he hadn’t tried, but working in such a public area made calling the Orion impossible and no one had the Ex-Primes comm frequency except Prowl who was impossible to contact too.

Jazz desperately wanted-- needed direction.

“Talking to your little intelligence friend?”

Jazz almost jumped out of his plating. Swiveling around Jazz came face to face with Sentinel who loomed over him.

“Sentinel Prime Sir?” Jazz forced his vocalizer into a calm tone.

“Just got off the comms with the Vos ruins team. Just letting you both know they’re sending Getaway back to central intelligence,” Sentinel smirked.

It was never a good sign when Sentinel smirked.

From the screen behind him Cliff jumper stuttered, “I appointed him head of intelligence there, what reason does he have to come back?”

They had agreed to split up, cover ground as the three of them, transfer information. If Getaway

was heading back into Iacon without warning them, then something was wrong.

Why hadn't he warned them?

Sentinel leaned forward further, coming fairly securely into Jazz's personal space. He vented hot and uncomfortable over Jazz's own plating.

"Do you see that?" Sentinel pointed to the large screen on deck. On the broadcast Optimus clashed into Megatron, ripping a piece of plating square off the Warlord's waist.

"Jazz," Sentinel crooned, "Getaway told me"

Jazz stiffened, optics going wide in an absent minded admission of guilt. Still, Sentinel continued.

"Now I'm not one to go running my mouth. Not without due cause no. But you see Jazz, *babe*. Babe, I have cause now. Do you see that? Up on screen? I'm going to end that. But to get there I need mechs willing to participate in a little give and take, and honestly Jazz? It seems like you've forgotten what kind of relationship we have."

Sentinel leaned down, placing a soft hiss on the Major's lip plates. With a soft tone he continued to whisper, "Now Ultra Magnus already knows about your intelligence friend, and so Getaway is going to take over for him. See? I'm giving, and now he's going to get me on the front lines, not stuffed up here giving orders. Give and take."

Jazz swallowed. Hard.

"Call it an example, a show of power to convince you to pick the right side. See what has that traitor Prime has given you? Jazz I could give you at least something in return. *I could give you so much more.*"

Behind him, Cliffjumper screamed on the screen; the obvious sounds of a struggle filling his audials.

Two... no, one. He was alone now. That brought OPTImus' countdown to what? Five? Five of them? How in the pit would the five of them take on two armies? For what goal? To what end?

Jazz gazed slightly over to Ultra Magnus over Sentinel's shoulder. The Magnus watched them closely-- a silent observer in cornering the major.

Jazz jumped as a gunshot went off from the screen behind him, followed but a loud thump.

"Oups," Sentinel hummed, "oh well i suppose it couldn't be helped. Should we get you down to interrogation then? Or are you going to tell us what you know here?"

Jazz glanced around, several mech around them peeked at the display before them as Sentinel caressed Jazz's cheek.

"I don't know anything more than Getaway does," Jazz rationalized, "Sentinel Prime Sir I have nothing to tell you that he hasn't already."

Sentinel smirked, "That's where you're wrong Jazz. See Optimus wouldn't answer a stranger or even me or the Magnus. But you... you're one of his."

Jazz's face fell.

"You ready to go undercover babe?"

Jazz nodded.

Chapter End Notes

THANK YOU ALL FOR SUCH AWESOME COMMENTS YOU GIVE ME LIFE
SOME DAYS I SWEAR

Next time;

... why the hell is Prowl in trypticon and why the hell did he break out?

Filling Gaps

Chapter Summary

It only takes a trip to prison to get Prowl to admit his feelings.

Chapter Notes

Fuck this chapter. Let it die and rot. Necessary evil

Special thanks to Entangledwood (I am so sorry i can not figure out how to link on here) For getting me through this and beta-ing part of this chapter for me. You saved me

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Prowl made no attempt to fight his guards but that didn't mean he was co-operative. They still dragged him mercilessly down the hall, his pedes dragging behind him. His paint was already chipped from his fight with the Magnus only what? Earth hours earlier?

Dread pooled in a pit low in his chassis.

It made no sense.

He was just trying to warn him.

Had Magnus not wanted a warning?

What would come of the-

Lost in thought Prowl hadn't realized the Elite Guards holding him had turned. His helm jarred as they threw him unceremoniously to the ground, hitting his helm at an odd angle. They left with little more ceremony. The inhibitor claw they had shoved onto him itched on his back.

"Twenty clicks..." Prowl whispered to himself, rubbing his helm, "twenty clicks from door to the cell."

"Twenty- one," a voice corrected above him.

Prowl shot up and as the energy field behind him engaged he looked up at the mech in front of him.

The mech before him was small and green. Smaller, in fact, than Bumblebee was. Despite likely being one of the smallest Autobots Prowl had ever seen the mechs optics shone bright Decepticon red.

"Twenty," Prowl stated, rising to his pedes and looming over the small mech, "My legs are longer than yours."

The small mech paused for a moment, thinking over the notion for a moments before nodding.

“Minimus,” The mech stated dutifully as he held out his hand, “Minimus Ambus.”

“Prowl.”

The fell into silence and Prowl got a good look at the cell around them. Dingy and dark the cell looked in horrible disrepair except for the few areas someone had attempted to clean; picking away at rust and sediment settled over the year. Despite both of their relatively small size the cell still gave little personal space between them. It was easy to let the heavy dread of claustrophobia and confinement settle in but Prowl fought the urge; focusing himself instead on finding a way out.

20 clicks from here to the outer gate. They had dragged him down past the first level- a coil of what Prowl assumed were the least threatening prisoners and into the second level.

So they considered him a treat- he might be able to use that to his advantage.

The real question was why was minimus on the second level? The mech was tiny and virtually harmless.

Prowl kept the question to himself.

Prowl spoke softly, “How many guards are on this floor?”

“If you plan on escaping you really have no chance,” Minimus brought himself up onto the single berth slab that took half of their cell.

“I don’t really have a choice,” Prowl responded as fact, “There are mechs outside who need me.”

“You step one foot out of that energy field- even if you could disable it, you’ll just be thrown in deeper,” Minimus rationalized, providing his own factual tone.

“I *have to*, ” Prowl emphasized, “Megatron is coming back and I need to be there to help stop him.”

Minimus sighed and relented

Luckily for Prowl, Minimus seemed exceedingly forthcoming about information after that. The prison itself was actually majority guards-- something Prowl should have expected but didn’t. To every Decepticon forgotten in a cell save for providing fuel, there was at least seven Autobots on call and waiting. Apparently, this had only happened recently in response to Megatron pushing their borders.

The Prison was made up of three levels total. The top- reserved for ‘cons who willingly surrendered near the beginning of the war was the least guarded. The second- mainly containing Decepticons with no threatening abilities (Prowl made a mental note to ask what ‘abilities’ meant’) was where they are.

The third was a beast in its own right.

Minimus explained they kept the real threats there; Mad Decepticons who never gave up on escape, mechs with odd glitches that made them too dangerous to see the surface ever again.

It was good that the way out was *up* and not *down* Prowl mused.

When Prowl inquired as to how minimus has remembered all of that, he simply responded, “Boredom, and... well. I enjoy being organized.”

Sheepishly Minimus brushed off the question. Prowl didn't press it further.

If intelligence had taught him anything it was to value planning, organization and secrecy in the right situation.

There was little more he could do in the cramped room. Still, he sat down, crossed his legs and *focused*.

It felt like hours before they talked again.

“Are you still doing that humming?” Minimus’ voice cut through the darkness of the cell. His optics cast an eerie glow across the cell that clashed against the dull blue light of the stasis field that kept them inside.

It broke Prowl's quiet focus and drug him back to the present.

“It’s called processor over matter,” Prowl hissed back, “It’s a very delicate technique”

“My apologies,” Minimus sat up from the berth, “I did not mean to interrupt.”

Prowl sighed and rubbed his nasal ridge. Slowly, he came out of his crossed legged position and relaxed his joints.

“You seem distressed.”

“Megatron is on his way to Cybertron, Ultra Magnus may be arresting my- ” *team, friends-* “ co-workers and I’m stuck here in a cell, ” Prowl forced out and got to his pedes.

Minimus looked down, not ashamed but contemplative.

“What’s your plan once you get out anyways,” Minimus asked, “barrel out of here and then what?”

“Get Jazz! Fix this! something!” Prowl quipped back, “sneaking out won't be a problem, I just need to help; to Fix this!”

There was another pause between them.

“Well, there is one more thing,” Minimus started.

When Minimus had suggested crawling through the vents to the lower levels Prowl had thought him insane if not a bit intuitive. And if Prowl was completely honest he should have thought of it himself.

The vents systems themselves were built in such a way to direct cool air down and disperse the hot air through a meshed vent system. They were too small for any war builds but fit his frame quite snugly.

The vents down sloped at an exponential rate as if to pull down escapees and for a moment contemplated the possibility if that was the intention. The entire prison felt like an overgrown vermin trap.

Prowl slowly allowed himself to slide further down the sloped vent, wincing as a valve cover snapped shut behind him.

Still, minimus had suggested if he had been truly desperate he should try looking for the one mech rumored to have contact with the surface. For better or for worse the mech was being kept on the lower levels.

And so Prowl was going to have to go to him.

With his wheels jammed uncomfortably against the vent walls he continued lower into the pit.

Time-- as Prowl found out, passes slower when you think you're heading to your death. But eventually- and Prowl really did mean *eventually* , he came upon a panel he could rip open with his servos.

He attempted to do so quietly, pulling at the edges quietly but the metal creaked and flared out, causing it to crash to the floor.

Prowl froze and waited.

When nothing but a few murmurs from the cells below echoed off the walls Prowl deemed it safe enough to drop down.

The lower level looked almost identical to his- save for the inmates.

The Decepticons around him watched with red optics but said nothing; content to just watch and observe at the moment from their cells.

Prowl paused, continuing to watch them without making a move.

They blinked.

Prowl slowly straightened and took a tentative step.

“Hey, there little mech-”

“Haven’t seen anyone new in so long--”

“You come from above...?”

“- The most exciting thing in two million years.”

Prowl froze again, eyeing those around him. The murmurs continued around him and when they showed no signs of stopping Prowl pushed forward in what he believed a downward direction.

“What are you looking for small Autobot?”

Prowl stopped his pace, turning towards the question.

“A small mech like you doesn’t come down here voluntarily,” the voice murmured, “So you must be looking for something.”

Prowl walked closer to the cell.

In the dark, deep in the cove of the cell, a faint figure stared up at him.

“I am,” Prowl provided, “Why do you care?”

The figure stood; more like unfolded into view. The mech must have been laying down but now

gazed down at him.

“Shut up ‘warp,”

Prowl whirled around to look at the new voice. A similarly shaped mech stood at the field directly across from them. Proud seeker wings stood at their back making Prowl pause.

They looked familiar.

“Come on TC!” the first mech groaned like a disappointed child, “You don't see this as an opportunity?”

“More like a new way for you to get in trouble,” The second mech hissed.

Then their familiarity hit him.

“Starscream,” Prowl stated blandly, pulling both mechs out of their squabble.

Both mechs froze. The closer Prowl looked the more they looked like the seeker on earth save for a few modifications and head shapes. Along with their colours purple and blue respectively.

“You know 'screamer?” Skywarp asked, now pressing himself against the field.

“Pffft, he's let us rot in here for close to a million years. Who cares about him?” Thundercracker brushed off.

Skywarp only scowled.

“Yes, I am looking for something,” Prowl finally answered, “Minimus said there was a mech down here that the guards visit regularly and I'm-”

“Brainstorm,” Skywarp interrupted, “They brought him in and moved Minimus out. Good to hear he's still here though.”

“He was in the lower level?” Prowl questioned.

“All outliers are,” Thundercracker provided, “Stuck in the basement and collared.”

Prowl stared between them both.

Thundercracker rolled his optics and craned his neck, putting emphasis on a small band of metal wrapped around it, “itches a bit of a lot more than an inhibitor claw.”

Prowl wheeled around to find a similar one wrapped around Skywarp's neck.

“But minimus isn't an outlier,” Prowl argued.

...Was he?

Skywarp shrugged, “they sure as frag treated him like one.”

“It doesn't matter,” Prowl huffed, done with the small talk, “Where is Brainstorm?”

“I'll tell ya,” Skywarp leaned forward and for a moment Prowl thought he might slink through the stasis field. Instead, Skywarp stopped just short of the field and smirked, “if you get me out of here.”

Prowl glared, "I don't really feel like making friends with more 'Cons than I have, to thank you."

Prowl moved to walk further down the tunnels but Thundercracker's voice stopped him.

"What my brother means to say is we're willing to help,"

Prowl paused.

"See TC and I can do some pretty amazing things when it comes down to it" Skywarp sounded a bit more desperate now, "I might be able to get one short-range teleport out but its TC I'm worried about-

"If it will get you two to shut up," Prowl shot around and glared, "then fine."

Skywarp smiled.

Though Prowl had his doubts about the two seekers it seemed at least they weren't liars. Crazy Maybe but not liars.

Skywarp shrieked and clutched the collar around his neck once appeared in the hallway in front of Prowl. The ninja bot nearly jumped out of his plating at the sudden appearance. Skywarp looked worse for the wear though as smoke rose from his neck cabling and he slumped weakly.

"You okay there?" Thundercracker's concerned voice rang out between them.

Skywarp slumped to the floor, propping himself up against a wall, "Just need a minute."

Prowl nodded and turned to Thundercracker, "One more time."

"The frag is that supposed to mean?" The huffing purple seeker snapped.

"Well, when you said you could teleport-

"You didn't believe me!"

"Not really, no," Prowl sat himself down in front of Thundercracker cell, "now shut up while I do all the work."

"Touchy," the blue seeker added.

"My friends call me brooding," Prowl brought himself to the control panel on the outside of the Seeker's cell, "let's just pray Shockwave is an idiot."

"He's not," Thundercracker deadpanned.

"I know."

Prowl approached the keypad next to Thundercracker's cell. Wiping the old dust off it he punched in his access code and waited.

Access Granted.

The field died in a glitched whine and Thundercracker stared at him in disbelief.

“And you couldn’t have done that for mine?!” Skywarp reached in to shake him but before Prowl’s instinctual flinch could even register Thundercracker grabbed the purple seeker’s wrist and held it up and away.

“He’s elite guard,” Thundercracker spat, “And it seems Shockwave isn’t doing his job properly and keeping you at bay.”

Yet another reason to regret coming home.

Skywarp paused, looking over Prowl with a nervous interest.

Prowl rubbed his nasal ridge in annoyance. If he had to put up with any more he might as well develop nervous ticks like Prime anyways.

“I got arrested. It’s a long story,” Prowl tried to rationalize.

“We’ve been here for a million years,” Thundercracker’s tone turned dangerous, ebbing on the more familiar Decepticon intimidation Prowl was familiar with.

The point though was clear.

Explain.

“Can we find Brainstorm first before I go on a rant?” Prowl took a step back, bracing himself for an outburst, “Unlike you two I am on a tight schedule.”

There was a silent conversation between the two and for a moment Prowl thought they might be speaking over their comms. But it was standard to have them deactivated.

The silence dragged on and Prowl realized his mistake.

Rule number one: the Decepticons have Deception in their name for a reason.

He had gotten too comfortable.

No comfortable wasn’t the right term.

Too attached.

Jazz’s paranoia about reporting Optimus had been correct.

And now he had made the same mistake, throwing himself into a problem without thinking. Why? Because he had found a datapad with the future written down on it?

Because you’ve become sentimental.

His spark whispered to him.

Because you care about what happens to Jazz. To Cliffjumper. To Blurr. To Getaway. To Bumblebee. To Bulkhead. To Ratchet.

To Optimus.

To Cybertron.

There... was a lot to unpack there.

A lot to unpack and he really didn't have the time to do so.

The Seekers' conversation seemed to end abruptly and Skywarp moved to grab him. Prowl launched himself backward immediately and held steady now out of reach.

"Wait wait wait!" Prowl forced out.

They didn't.

Thundercracker launched forward this time, followed by Skywarp who didn't stop. Both of them continued forward, reaching for Prowl who was much swifter.

"Come on!" Skywarp pushed past the other seeker and grabbed at him again, "Being a hostage isn't so bad!"

"Shut up 'warp!" Thundercracker hissed out and pushed to the front once more.

Prowl mentally scolded himself for releasing the two, to begin with. From beside him, several other 'cons yelled from their cells but Prowl gave them no mind, instead looking above him for any sign of weakness in the vents.

Turning around to his original access point wasn't an option but neither was trying to rip down a new vent cover. But there seemed to be no weaknesses in the vents this time around and so his only option was to run. To where exactly?

His pistons would eventually strain and his engines would eventually tire. Without the ability to transform it was likely the two of them would outrun him eventually.

He needed an alternative. He needed a distraction. He needed-

A door.

It was old, the access pad had been used recently but it still looked old and decrepit. Still. It was better than running until he couldn't anymore.

And they were coming up to it fast-- and with it a dead end.

Prowl didn't slow his pace; didn't have the time to. Instead, he hit it head on, bracing the impact with one of his arms while furiously typing in his access code with the other. The door wooshed open and with nothing supporting his weight any longer he stumbled forward into whatever room was behind the door.

"IT'S YOU!" Brainstorm yelled out pointing to Prowl in an over the top gesture.

Prowl faltered, raising his visor in question.

"The Lab! You snuck into our-- Perceptor's lab! You got me arrested!" Brainstorm continued to hiss out.

Prowl re-engaged; fumbling uselessly for his ninja stars that had been removed earlier. He took a step back, coming up against another hard surface blocking the door.

Prowl whirled around only to find both seekers blocking his exit; their frames still hot from their previous chase.

Brainstorm looked different from when Prowl had glanced at him through the vents. Much larger

than he was in the lab, Brainstorm towered over him. Still teal and orange, the real change came in the form of two large wings protruding from the mechs back.

Prowl's spark sank; turns out Shockwave wasn't the only undercover Decepticon on Cybertron.

"Minimus didn't say-" Was all he got out before Thundercracker grabbed him, wrapping a servo around his midsection. For a moment Prowl's mind went back to the Stealhaven as Megazarak held him down and forced him into stasis.

He trashed.

"Stop wiggling," The blue seeker hissed.

"Wait up," Brainstorm butt in, "This doesn't seem right."

"It can't be a coincidence you're here so close to the big day. A member of Optimus' team here means..."

Despite not being able to see Brainstorm's mouth Prowl could almost imagine the pensive look on the Decepticon's face.

"Optimus wants to betray Megatron now?"

Prowl's engines stalled.

"Oh, I'm right! Of course, I am a genius after all," Brainstorm beamed and moved closer to the small Autobot, "You have to tell me what's happening!"

Skywarp came closer too, actually reaching for Prowl from the other seeker. Thundercracker moved him away though, holding Prowl out of reach.

"Alright, now I'm more confused," Thundercracker said, ignoring Skywarp's continued attempt to grab Prowl.

"Long story," Brainstorm waved off, "But if you must know Megatron is planning on invading Cybertron and there's this Autobot involved but its kinda a weird thing where he's got this weird future vision-"

"Time travel," Prowl corrected.

Brainstorm's optics briefly glanced back to his work table before flashing back to Prowl, "*You've got to let me talk to him .*"

Prowl pushed on Thundercracker's servo harder, "I may be able to explain if you *let me down .*"

"Thundercracker let the Autobot down, and close the door, would you? We wouldn't want the patrol guards finding out I have visitors."

Reluctantly Thundercracker put Prowl down, eyeing him carefully, "Let me remind you who exactly is part of the command trine-"

Skywarp interrupted with a, "Shut up TC I wanna hear a story!"

Brainstorm ushered him to a chair too large for him and smiled, "Tell me *everything.* "

Prowl chose to omit several details; namely the Megazarak incident, the swerve arrest and anything that may harm the Autobot cause in general. But eventually, he finished with an odd tone.

Prowl refused to call it pleading.

“hm,” The blue seeker leaned against the wall near the door, “I think I see the problem here.”

Skywarp chimed in, “other than the Autobots turning in on themselves in a self-destructive attempt to control their populace? Or are we talking about this Optimus time loop thing?”

“Someone’s pulling strings,” Brainstorm offered, “Someone higher up than Ultra Magnus.”

“We have to escape,” Prowl said, “There’s nothing we can do sitting here.”

Brainstorm chimed in, “You said you knew Minimus?”

Prowl nodded.

“I have an idea,” Brainstorm sounded happy- almost too happy, “Go grab him. ‘warp, ‘cracker, you can help too.”

“What’s the plan?” Skywarp chirped.

“I’m going to make a really big gun.”

Prowl fit quite nicely in with the other guards, though he did keep an eye out for those who may have saw him being brought in and processed.

Though it came with its own worry- Shockwave didn't make mistakes. So why did his access code still work?

The only reason he could come up with was that the invasion was already set in motion-- that they were running out of time.

Surprisingly *'help me stop and invasion'* was enough to convince minimus to help out. Prowl chose not to mention that the 'Cons were in it to join Megatron. But deep down he assumed Minimus knew that.

“He’s a load bearer,” Brainstorm explained, “Pretty rare. Like point one percenter rare.”

“I know that. That doesn’t explain why I’m here” Minimus complained from his place by the door of Brainstorm's lab.

Brainstorm continued, “For those in the room who don't it means his neural net and spark are made to hold a second, much larger chassis. In simple terms. I mean it's a lot more complicated than that.”

“You want to turn me into a massive weapon,” Minimus deadpanned.

“Already had Skywarp and Thundercracker grab some... *donations* from others for the armor,” Brainstorm chirped.

Prowl didn't think about what donations meant to the Decepticons.

“Fine,” Minimus agreed, “Fine, but nothing too weird.”

Brainstorm visibly deflated.

The first rumble hit them during Prowl's recharge cycle. It woke him violently in the cell. Beside him Minimus jolted up, half asleep and definitely confused.

“It's time,” Prowl hissed and threw himself from the bed and towards the access vents, “Let's go.”

Lockdown initiated by the time they had slid down the vent. Both of them watched carefully as a swarm of guards passed beneath them and only dropped down when it was clear.

Falling into an easy position with Prowl at Minimus' back gave the illusion of a Prisoner and a guard. It wasn't perfect but it got them to Brainstorm's lab without incident.

They didn't talk as they worked. Brainstorm aided Minimus into the suit with only brief explanation sparsely whispered. Prowl unhooked the Seekers' restraint collars and works on the inhibitor claws at the same pace.

The prison around them rumbled again.

Freeing Skywarp, Prowl tapped his shoulder and moved to Brainstorm. Thundercracker and Skywarp vanished almost immediately, likely going to free whatever Decepticons they could.

Brainstorm closed the armor around Minimus and it powered up. Slowly, creaking the entire time the suit moved slowly. Multicolored and more mashed together than anything the suit had no face, no vocalizer and so Minimus gave a small thumbs up.

Prowl clambered onto the suits back and clung to the best of his ability.

Brainstorm hesitated but did the same.

“Are you sure this will work?” Prowl asked cautiously.

“No idea!” Brainstorm laughed and initiated the launch sequence.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you, everyone, for your support during the writing of this chapter. Between struggling with the content and health it means a lot to have all of you being so patient and understanding.

The next chapter is Already in the editing phase and won't take as long I promise.

Next Time!

Back to the Action!

Prowl secures his place as SIC

Back to the Plot

Chapter Summary

With Optimus finishing what he started, his fragmented group starts to pull together nicely-- if not for a small fracture that definitely absolutely won't mess things up later.

Plus some fluff and a new ship because I'M SHAMMMEEEELESSSS

Chapter Notes

WHO ASKED FOR A DOUBLE UPDATE?!? NO ONE?!?! TO BAD

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

With Prowl advancing at a breakneck speed Optimus found renewed energy. Bashing critically at Megatron with new vigor the Warlord was pushed back into purely defensive maneuvers. For the first time in what felt like centuries Optimus was *winning* .

Even taking down Megatron would not be sure-fire victory; it would though, confuse the army enough for the ex-Prime and his crew to make their escape safely.

Optimus side checked the warlord with his shoulder, throwing him several feet forward and lining him up for a direct hit as Optimus took a wide swing with his hammer. And though Megatron blocked the hit with his swords the electric charge still traveled down the Decepticon's plating causing internal damage. Megatron goes flying back to the ground below them.

:: Holy Slag Bossbot!:: Bumblebee chirped on the comm line,:: It's like a light show out there and you are kicking aft!::

Optimus dragged his attention up from the struggling Decepticon bellow him and up to the Orion. The ship was still taking heat fire, but less so now that Blitzwing and Bumblebee we're taking on some of the heavy hitters.

Thinking it over for no longer than a nano-click Optimus decided he could spare a moment and focused his attention on clearing the Orion's path.

Charging the Magnus Hammer the small mech advanced, flying directly between the Orion and the Space Bridge it was aiming for. Several Decepticon troops fled the general area leaving a gap in their barrage and giving Optimus a direct line to those doing real damage.

Almost immediately Optimus got a hit in on Lugnut, sending him flying out of the Orion's flight path and allowing the Orion to swing just so--

BOOM!!

Four down. One to go.

Thank Primus for Ratchet's good aim.

Despite the limited time to get into position, it was a direct hit, causing one large spike of the bridge to crumple forward. Avoiding the crumbling debris was challenging enough without the added enemy fire. Surprisingly though Optimus made it out mostly unscathed save for a blaster shot a little too close to a jab wound from Megatron's sword. Speaking of whom--

Megatron came from nowhere and grabbed one of his wings, tearing at the appendage with clawed digits. It didn't hurt per se but several warnings concerned him.

They fell together; Optimus unable to direct his flight path and Megatron simply refusing to do so. The dust from Ratchet's shot had yet to fade as they both fell, tumbling together in a whirlwind of confusion and smoke.

"When!?" Megatron spat at him, "When did that happen?!"

Optimus refused to answer, flaring his plating to slow their fall marginally. The air burned at his joints as his body tried to compensate for both of them.

"On the borders?! At the end of the war?! Which battle?!" Megatron seethed, "Tell me!"

When did I hurt you?

Optimus chose to ignore the silent question.

Still holding his tongue they crashed into the ground and all went dark.

Optimus' optics online only clicks later, flickering to a Warlord pulling himself up above him.

:: Optimus!:: Ratchet's concerned voice came through his comm array. Optimus was more surprised the thing was still intact.

"Do you still function?" Megatron grumbled, rising up above him, stabbing himself in the rubble of their crash site.

:: I'm coming down to you, don't move!:: Ratchet barked over the comm before cutting off quickly.

Optimus groaned, dragging himself up and allowing rubble to fall from his frame.

"When did it happen Optimus?" Megatron gritted his teeth, aiming his sword down at the small mech below him.

His jetpack was destroyed. He had taken much more damage in the fall than Megatron did. Still, he was well enough to get a few more hits in and truly that's all he really needed to do. He just had to hold on until Prowl arrived.

Optimus pulled himself up and back onto his pedes, dragging the Hammer up with him. His left hip joint was misaligned and felt wrong as he stepped on it. Energon leaked freely from several gashes on his plating and he was running dangerously low on fuel. Still, he charged the hammer once more.

Megatron snarled at him; low and Dangerous.

"Surrender Optimus. Surrender and tell me what's going on."

"Optimus!"

Prowl.

Prowl came in light a beam of light; cutting through the smoke above them and landing beside Optimus.

::RETREAT:: Optimus blared onto the comms, turning around to look at the mechs around them.

:: On it,:: Bulkhead responded, and slowly the Orion turned North.

:: See ya in a few clicks Bossbot!:: Bumblebee chimed.

Optimus turned to Prowl, who had access to their channel but had yet to respond.

“Away tiny Autobot,” Megatron hissed, raising his sword, “Let the adults talk.”

Optimus stood strong glaring at the Warlord.

“Go Prowl,” Optimus commanded, barely acknowledging the ninja bots presence.

:: But Optimus-::

:: Everyone is headed north looking for a spot to regroup and access the Autobot situation. Go with them. They will need you.:: Optimus sternly shooting a stare Prowls way to emphasize his point.

There was a falter there-- uncertain and cautious. But just as fast as he arrived, Prowl ran.

“Ever the mother hen, Optimus, even to those who’ve abandoned you.” Megatron mused.

“If any good came of this escapade Megatron, it would be the realization that you learned some human terms,” Optimus smirked, feigning some sort of confidence.

Stall. Let them get away. Just take Megatron down.

Optimus advanced again. Megatron would be quicker; would hit harder and so Optimus would simply have to be smarter. After all, it wasn't as if he wasn't always fighting at a disadvantage anyway.

Megatron raised his sword in a clear mock attack. Instead of swinging low as Megatron anticipated, Optimus took the moment to wheel around, pivoting on his heel and jarring himself upward into the sword.

As a mock blow, Megatron had not, in fact, put his whole weight into the blow and such the blade lodged itself into Optimus’ shoulder joint, jamming and becoming stuck instead of cutting clean through.

The arm itself had already been heavily weakened due to reckless use of the Magnus Hammer earlier and would almost become useless after. To Optimus, it was worth the trade-off.

The small mech clenched his upper arm and shoulder plating, effectively trapping the sword further. In a daring move, he twisted, ripping the sword from the Warlord's grasp. The twist gave him a burst in momentum, allowing him to turn fully and make another direct hit to Megatron's side. Optimus fully dispersed the residual energy from the hammer.

Megatron went up in a plume of smoke and blue electricity that arched around him to standing metal rebar.

Megatron went down again.

But the warlord was known for his ability to get back up again from the point of no return.

Desperate to reunite with the rest of his team Optimus stepped over Megatron and began charging once more.

Megatron glared up at him. The electricity seemed to have fried his motor function circuitry. Perfect.

“You’d strike down a wounded mech Optimus? Battered and beaten. Honestly and you call me-”

“Yes,” Optimus took an invent. When had his nerves calmed?

“-Pardon?”

“Yes, Megatron. I would strike you down. I apologize in advance,” Optimus licked his cracked lip plates.

Was he actually going to do this?

And just like that the nerves washed over him once again.

Gone was the adrenaline of battle, letting down the storm barricade of emotion he had sealed away. Optimus raised his hammer and *shook*.

“What are you waiting for *Saviour of the Autobots*? Go on and cast your judgment down on the mech that gave you those scars. If I didn’t know about your academy days I would have thought revenge to be your motivator,” Megatron smirked.

It was an obvious, deliberate taunt to get Optimus to spit back.

“I’m sorry,” was all Optimus could force out.

Could he really kill a mech? Do the thing that had ruined him to another?

“Sorry?” Megatron laughed, cruel and taunting, “tell that to the millions of war-frames I’ve liberated. They’ll likely be angrier than my ghost, *Prime*.”

The unorganized rantings of a mech on his deathbed; Optimus could relate.

His arms shook desperately now; not only for the prospect of killing his murderer but also from the strain of the hammer held mostly by his one still good arm.

“Go on, get your revenge for whatever wound I gave you,” Megatron glared, “I hope it brings you peace and that the other Decepticons escape with a good time to get away from your Autobot friends.”

Blue cast over them. The growing aqua light hadn't registered with Optimus as it cast over both of them. But all too soon the light was too bright for him to ignore.

Both mechs turned at the same moment to look at the last functional bridge.

The incoming ship was a frightening image. Manufactured during the middle of Megatron's first campaign the ship resembled a Decepticon brand.

There was only one of them that still functioned.

The Peaceful Tyranny.

Optimus froze, condensation setting into his components. His shoulder, the sword still protruding from it, burned as the energon in his system heated up with his fear.

Images of the months he spent aboard Tarn's ship flashed through his mind.

"What Megatron wants with you I have no clue..."

"See it's meant to burn the energon inside you while leaving the tubing intact..."

"Flood his fuel pump again. I like the way he wretches..."

Optimus scrambled. Falling over Megatron and onto his aft, the noise around him seemed to disappear. Several mechs got good shots in on him as he ran from the incoming ship. His shadow stretched before him in the blue light as a heavy artillery shell hit him in the side, throwing him to the ground and peeling back the plating on his right side.

Still, he ran North; stopping for nothing.

Blitzwing landed gracefully in the Orion's loading dock despite the damage on his frame. Smoke rose from them both and they would need a trip to the med bay but that was the extent of it.

Bumblebee hopped off, ignoring the faint explosions in the distance, "I'll help Ratchet get the med bay prepped. What's your damage big guy?"

Stoically Blitzwing deadpanned, "Are you sure I should be here...? Optimus won't attack?"

Bumblebee stopped immediately, turning back to the large 'con behind him.

"Um... Probably?" Bee shrugged sheepishly, "It'll be fine I'm sure. Now come on, what's your damage?"

Blitzwing dragged a servo down his face and rolled his good optic before responding, "The plating on my back is damaged structurally, My optic is cracked and-"

"Look all I'm saying is we should have mounted a shoulder cannon! But no! That is too weird for you!" An unfamiliar voice rang out in the landing bay followed by the loud clang of other landing mechs.

Standing in the bay doors a teal and Orange seeker stood, flicking his wings in an excited display. Beside him staggered a mass of accumulated metal and upgrades. Still, the thing spoke.

"I would appreciate the effort in the symmetry department next time Brainstorm," a dignified voice came from the mass, "Now may we remove this contraption from my frame?"

Already Blitzwing was lowering his cannons, heating in warning but not yet firing.

From the patchwork mech, something unhinged from its massive form and landed on the floor. With the odd lighting of night and gunfire, it took Bee a minute to make out the frame.

“Prowl!” Bumblebee yelled running over to the ninja-bot. With no hesitation, Bumblebee swung into the black mech's arms and embraced him tightly. Prowl hugged back.

Blitzwing's engines gave a warning rumble behind him.

“Easy Blitzbutt,” Bumblebee let go and beamed at the Decepticon behind him, “He’s from earth.”

As the words left his vocalizer they turned sour in his mouth. Turning back to Prowl he glared, poking the mech's chest.

“Yeah! He was on earth and he got Optimus arrested! And who the hell are these two?! You’ve got a lot of explaining to do!”

Prowl's calm smile turned flat and he let out a shallow vent.

“I know I’m sorry Bumblebee. I jumped to conclusions. This is Minimus Ambus,” Prowl motioned to the hulking masses of mech parts and then to the seeker with them, “And Brainstorm. They can be trusted.”

Bumblebee gave another accusatory glare, “Yeah well we’ll see what Optimus says about all this. Because of you, I got sent into space, we worked for the 'cons Prowl.”

Blitzwing cleared his vocalizer behind him.

“Okay, it wasn’t all bad but Optimus really got into shit with Megatron and-”

Brainstorm leaned around Minimus and raised his hand, “Shit?”

Bumblebee mustered all the frustration he could in his tone, clenching his fist, “It’s like slag but human okay? Like I was saying Prowl, you don’t understand what you forced us to do-”

“Excuse me?” Minimus chimed in, “are you the commanding officer here?”

“Shut up!” Bumblebee yelled, “Shut up! I’m trying to scold Prowl here!”

“Minimus brings up a good point though,” Prowl motioned between them, “Where’s Ratchet? He should be the commanding officer until Optimus returns.”

“If he does,” Blitzwing deadpanned.

Bumblebee jumped up between the massive framed around him, “Don’t ignore me!”

Passing by the massive triple changer in the room a hand-scooped him up and placed him on the mech's shoulders. Bumblebee, glad for the extra height, balanced himself on the kibble there. Eventually, he slumped down on Blitzwing's helmet.

“We’re out of immediate gunfire, we should take the time to regroup and organize a strategy for Optimus’ return,” Prowl took several strides towards the entrance to the rest of the ship.

“We should find Ratchet and find a place to land so Optimus can catch up too. Not to mention it’s likely the Autobots have already set up some sort of Blockade somewhere,” Prowl continued.

With that, they headed to the bridge.

“My Lord-”

“I said get me functioning as soon as physically possible!” Megatron roared.

Though immobile it was a relief to find mechs still feared him enough to *shut up and do as they were told*. Besides, every moment they waited gave room for Starscream and Strika to continue arguing over scouting formations.

At least it hadn't progressed past that yet.

The twang of Hook ripping out burned wiring sent several pain notifications through his HUD yet he felt nothing but an off pressure.

The damage was obviously immense if not visible. According to the medic, most of his mobility, pain and sensor wiring would have to be replaced before the movement was even an option. It was a miracle he could even talk at all apparently.

It would be hours (damn that earth term) before he would be mobile again, more so if he kept overheating in anger.

A difficult task given the previous events of the morning.

:: May I enter my Lord?: Shockwave's calm and cool voice smoothed over part of his frustration. He pinged a confirmation and the spy entered.

“Don’t continue if you don’t bring good news,” Megatron grumbled as he watched hook dive in once again to his circuitry.

Shockwave canted his antlers, looking about as smug as his mutilations would allow, “Good thing I bring good news then.”

Megatron raised an optical ridge, urging Shockwave further.

“Upon my return to Kaon, I happened to run into an Autobot who carried a certain weapon. Not only is the All-spark secured but I may also have a solution to your Prime Problem,” Shockwave produced a datapad, “It seems he was operating under Optimus’ command. Returning to my lab I can begin gaining access to his communication channels.”

Below the confident stature of the spy, there was a small falter in his optic. Megatron chose to ignore it.

“And what of the troops?” Megatron questioned. Beside him one of the medical assistants took the datapad, holding it in Megatron's view without instruction.

“We only lost a few mechs, a few from friendly fire. The rest got trapped between the Orion and its targets. No ships were lost. We have scouts heading out into the city though their effectiveness will be dictated by Commander Starscream’s and Commander Strika’s ability to cooperate.”

“So likely they will be ineffective until I return,” Megatron deadpanned.

“Likely.”

“You are dismissed Shockwave. Take your prisoner and begin frequency scanning.” Megatron laid his helm back down, scanning over the information in front of him.

Shockwave gave a sharp nod before exiting the room.

The report went into more detail, highlighting all three defectors in the battle along with other losses. Optimus had been expected in some capacity.

Megatron grit his dentae.

Expected in a capacity, yes. Protests. Verbal retaliation. Maybe some warning to the Autobots. After all, it was part of the reason they had changed targets. But this? A full-blown rebellion with a small but seemingly skilled splinter group including one of his own Generals, and one of his spies on Cybertron?

It made no sense. What was he even driven by? Hatred? He wasn't working for the Autobots.

The scars explained a lot but nothing at all, at the same time.

The Warlord shuttered his optics. No need to think himself in circles. For now, there were other things he could focus on.

Curb your anger.

:: Starscream:: Megatron grumbled into the comms, keeping his voice low.

:: You're on your deathbed Megatron, rest up! Leave this to me! In fact, if you're unable to return--
::

Megatron rolled his eyes and cut off the line.

::Strika::

:: Yes my Lord,:: Strika's response was immediate, controlled and a lot more helpful.

Megatron opened his optics as Hook pulled at one of his dead pain sensors, causing him to wince.

:: Send Tarn and his crew to me. I have a mission for them::

“What do you *mean* Ratchet went to find Optimus,” Prowl seethed at Bulkhead.

The green mech tensed visibly at the controls. Blitzwing, with Bumblebee still on his shoulders, pointed to a run-down structure in the distance.

“Zhere,” Blitzwing motioned, “Land zhere.”

Prowl rubbed his nasal ridge in exasperation, “You let Ratchet off the ship?!”

Bulkhead guided the controls towards the circular structure the Decepticon pointed out and grimaced, “Hey! You try stopping him next time while flying a spaceship!”

Prowl grumbled to himself.

Behind them, on the command deck, a clash rang out.

The entire deck turned. Brainstorm sat on his aft, legs in the air. Minimus, with his armor half, pulled off. Pieces scattered around them.

It was that moment Prowl realized he would have to hold the ship until they heard from Optimus.

Taking an invent, Prowl stood straight up.

“When we land Brainstorm and Blitzwing I want you to run a perimeter. Bulkhead, figure out what and who needs repairs with Bumblebee. Minimus, you and I need to run some things on comms, I have a few mechs I need to contact.”

Half of him expected the mechs around him to disagree. Instead, they starred.

“You almost sounded like Optimus there,” Bee broke the silence, looking almost disgusted, “You can’t just walk in here ordering people around. You *left us* Prowl.”

Bulkhead looked away, focusing himself on their flight path.

“It’s a decent plan,” Minimus chimed in.

Bumblebee whipped around, glaring at the green mech from Blitzwing's shoulders, “Yeah yeah we’ll just do what you want! Oh, wait! You’re a criminal.”

Minimus looked like someone had just punched him in the gut.

“Hey!” Brainstorm chimed in, “You don’t think perhaps maybe he was wrongly accused? Ya know. It's not like this place isn’t corrupt to slag anyways!”

Click-whir. Blitzwing cackled as the bridge fell into an uproar of yelling among the mechs. Prowl blinked dumbly as the mechs around him decided and took sides, swearing as they descended into the middle of a circular structure. Eventually, Blitzwing lowered his cannons. Brainstorm raised a gun from Minimus’ armor. Both weapons charged.

“Enough!” Prowl yelled, drawing the focus back to him.

“We don’t have the time or resources to waste on being indecisive! It doesn't matter who takes charge right now but we need someone to hold us together until Optimus’ arrives and since none of you seem to be competent enough to understand that It looks like it has to be me!

“Now Blitzwing and Brainstorm are going to secure the perimeter as I said! Bulkhead and Bumblebee are handling repairs while Minimus and I make contact with Optimus and Jazz! Is that clear?” Prowl finished, cringing his jaw closed uncomfortably as he stared down the mecha around him.

They touched down, the ship jerking harshly as they came to a stop.

Click-whir, “Fine,” Blitzwing responded coolly.

“Yes el Capitano,” Brainstorm lowered his blaster.

Bulkhead and minimus simply nodded.

Together they made it to the loading bay and filed out of the ship. At some point, Bumblebee had slid off Blitzwing's shoulders and walked himself out.

As the others moved, the small mech hung back, keeping close to Prowl.

When they were out of earshot he whispered, “Only until Optimus gets back. Not a moment longer.”

Prowl felt like rolling his optics but refrained from doing so. Instead, he nodded.

“I mean it Prowl,” Bumblebee glared, facing Prowl and tapping his chassis accusingly, “You don’t understand-”

Prowl gritted his dentae but could not resist the urge to spit back, “I arrested innocents. I fought Magnus. I was in prison. For all, I know the mechs I care about could be dead Bumblebee. Don’t tell me I don’t understand what I put you through”

Bumblebee only glared harder, bringing his fists to his side but refrained from swinging.

“I got attacked by a scraplet. Then attacked by Megazarak-- some old age warframe. Optimus can’t power down for more than an hour at a time. He’s *glitched* too. Blitzwing, Bossbot and the new guy all defected and are now on Megatron’s shit list,” Bumblebee hissed, “Because you warned high command! Because you left Prowl!”

Prowl swallowed.

“Bulkhead’s too nice to say it but I at least hope Optimus and Ratchet give you slag for it Prowl. I know I’m not back on this bandwagon. So get your aft in line when Optimus gets back,” Bumblebee turned and stormed out of the hangar leaving Prowl alone.

Ratchet woke up to the sound of muffled gunfire and the sound of too mechs bickering; and well, the largest helm ache of his life. Years of experience guided him to keep quiet, keep his optics shuttered and simply listen. The longer he was thought to be still offline, the more information he could gather.

The longer he stayed online

“-’s an *Autobot*, ” one of the voices said in a hushed tone, “Orders are to *kill* not *capture*. ”

Ratchet forced down a shiver. The last thing he could remember was jumping out off the Orion-- heading towards Optimus and the brunt of the fighting-- and then... then nothing.

“He’s a medic,” another voice answered back, “He’s useful.”

“Sir with all due respect, I don’t think Turmoil-”

“Turmoil can shove it,” the second mech hissed out, “and so can you. There’s always a place for medics, the new empire is going to need workers.”

The other voice stopped at that, apparently taking it as sufficient explanation. There were the opening and closing of a door and for a moment Ratchet thought that he might be alone. That was at least until one of the sets of footsteps approached him.

Another door opened. This one was much closer to Ratchet

In a rush he ran a system scan, trying to tell if he it

had any weapons systems online-- he didn’t of course but it was worth the check. Soon enough there was a second door opening; this time much closer and Ratchet fought to keep himself still.

That was until a pede violently collided with his side, rolling him over and forcing his optics online. No longer able to hide it, Ratchet grunted as he slid to the closest wall.

Ratchet looked up at the mech above him as he curled in on himself. The mech could only be described as a small Decepticon or a large Autobot but the black of his plating and his red optics put him squarely in the former category.

“Could have woken me up a little gentler there,” Ratchet groundout.

The Decepticon above him stared blankly as if half surprised Ratchet had responded at all.

“What are you staring at?” Ratchet hissed out.

“A memory I think, I’m not sure how I feel about it yet.” the mech growled. Though from his tone, Ratchet had a pretty good idea how he felt.

The Decepticon leaned down, dragging a hand over his blaster on his hip in a motion Ratchet could only decipher as intentional. Ratchet in turn sat himself up against the wall, baking into it as the mech looked him over.

“What’s your designation?” The Decepticon asked.

Slag.

Was Megatron looking for him? To use as leverage? Had Optimus gotten away? Did the ‘Con’s need a hostage?

“I don’t have the patience to wait Autobot,” The mech hissed at him, almost spitting oral solute at him.

The hand that had brush over his blaster now actually pulled the weapon out, and brought it to Ratchet’s chest plates. Both of them held tense.

God what was that infernal human device?

“Ammeter,” Ratchet replied steadily.

Deadlock looked disappointed despite the mostly dead expression that held over his features. Ratchet waited for the gun to move but it held still. Expecting more questions Ratchet locked optics with the Decepticon.

“Disappointing,” He said, still not pulling back. Instead he pulled his arm back. Ratchet, seeing the strike coming, brought his shoulder up awkwardly but serving it’s function perfectly. Instead of the handle of the gun hitting him in the helm it collided painfully with his shoulder.

“Hm,” The Decepticon mumbled before pulling back, “Nice reflexes for an old man. What are you? A pre-war model? Something fancy.”

The Decepticon rose up back to a standing position, leaving Ratchet below him on the floor.

“So tell me Ammeter, What’s a mediclike you, doing out here in a receiving dock turned war zone?” Slowly, as if the persona was creeping slowly into him, the Decepticon added more and more of a charm into his disposition. Ratchet had the creeping feeling this was slowly descending into an interrogation.

Something Decepticons didn’t have the best reputation for going through peacefully.

“What?” Ratchet cocked an optical ridge up at his captor, “I’m not allowed to have a job anymore?”

Ratchet would admit, the entire situation had memory files edging into his processor from the Lockdown incident during the war but he was smarter now that he was then.

Smart enough as it is, to realize this 'con hadn't and may not recognize who he was for a while now. And making himself out to be a civilian may be more beneficial in this situation.

Sometimes he hated how easy it was to fall back into his battle torn state of mind; sometimes, it was useful.

"You're really calm for a civilian caught on a Decepticon ship," The mech said.

"We've been at war for four million years, I don't think true civilians exist anymore. Besides it isn't like Kaon has ever been some shining pit of sheltered mechs." Ratched responded.

"You sound like you talk from experience."

"I've been around war a long time kid, Been working around places like this for even longer."

The door sounding from off in the distance cut them off, and suddenly the mech's blaster rose back up to Ratchet and the 'Con's pede collided with his helm, forcing it against the wall behind him violently.

"Deadlock" Their new arrival commanded as he came up to the cell they occupied.

"Turmoil," the mech, who Ratchet could name as Deadlock, responded almost submissively, though there was a twng of something else in there.

It almost reminded him of how Optimus addressed Sentinel and Ratchet recognized it as ill concealed contempt.

What a time to get captured by decepticons with politics, Ratchet mused to himself.

"I was told you picked up a stray," Turmoil leaned around Deadlock and gave Ratchet a once over. His massive frame towering over both of them.

"A combat medic," Deadlock answered like it was a report, "Seemed out of place and I was curious."

Curiosity killed the cat, Ratchet wanted to quip.

But revelation brought it back, His processor pointed out.

Dedlock leaned back, putting more force onto the pede crushing Ratchet into the wall and allowing Turmoil a better look at Ratchet.

"Though a new pet may be amusing Deadlock I have to remind you that we're making an assault on Kaon at the moment," Turmoil leaned down despite his words, shoeing Deadlock out fo the way. The mech removed his pede from Ratchet and retreated as ordered.

"A paused assault," Deadlock stayed close despite Turmoil trying to come between him and Ratchet, "until Strika and Starscream gmcan get their heads out of each other's afts or Megatron gets back on his feet we're at a stalemate."

Turmoil was almost gentle as he caressed the damage. Slowly he dragged a thumb across Ratchet's damaged shoulder.

“All the more reason you should be back out there, we could use the scouts checking out the start of the Autobot blockade,” Turmoil smiled at Ratchet. From this position Deadlock likely didn't see it.

“After I finish here,” Deadlock argued.

Turmoil stood, this time turning to Deadlock and rolling the larger proceed of his kibble on his shoulders.

“Megatron put you under *my* command for this mission. It's time you acted like it,” Turmoil commanded.

“*For this mission*,” Deadlock emphasized, “what do you plan to do? Take the medic from me? You can have him. Turns out he was nothing special anyways.”

Turmoil's EM field events out as if he had won something.

“A pet would be interesting,” Turmoil mused, “perhaps Megatron will permit the keeping of such things after he exterminates most of them.”

Deadlock rolled his optics, “not that that's not creepy at all you old pervert.”

“Excuse me,” Ratchet interjected before someone took this petty argument any further, “just wondering if we could get to the part where you lock me up and you two get back to whatever shit plan Starscream has commanded.”

There was a pause.

“Shit?” Deadlock asked.

Ratchet scoffed, “Organic term.”

Turmoil's smile spread across his face, “For a medic you sure have a mouth on you. Sure we can skip to that. Would you care to come with me?”

Ratchet didn't like where this was going.

Sentinel kissed him on the cheek.

What once may have been comforting or at least tolerable now feel painful and foreign.

“Don't be so cold Jazz,” Sentinel hummed pulling away from the with mech, allowing his hand to linger for a moment on the major's jaw.

Jazz inwardly cringed but made no outward protest. Instead, he pulled a cord from the console in front of him and plugged it into his comm array.

Sentinel kept a hand suggestively on his lower back. In front of them, Perceptor worked something into the console; opening recording software and the comm line. Perceptor gave a curt nod and Jazz took an invent.

:: Prowl?: He asked tentatively.

:: Jazz!:: Prowl's response came almost instantly. Jazz's tank dropped. Oh, how he wished Prowl didn't respond.

:: Are you okay? And word from the others? Where are you:: Prowl rushed out.

Sentinel purred into his ear, “You’re fine. Cliffjumper died in a con attack. You’re on the Kaon border.”

Jazz shivered but kept his voice steady.

:: I'm fine Prowler-::

Sentinel sneered and squeezed his shoulder.

::- Uh Prowl. We lost contact with Blurr and Cliff. We think the con's got them. I'm on the Kaon border myself. I'm heading into ya soon.:: Jazz reported, keeping his tone serious.

:: You have no idea how happy I am to hear from you Jazz. Things are tense here without Optimus--:: there was a twang to his voice, as if Prowl was on the verge of tears. It made Jazz's lines run cold; emotionless.

Sentinel’s hand on his back moved up, squeezing Jazz’s shoulder assumably in anger.

:: What do you mean without Optimus?:: Jazz tuned into the hint and asked. Nervously he leaned forward on the console, gripping the edges a little harder than needed.

:: He got caught up fighting Megatron, we think he’s on his way with Ratchet but neither of them are answering their comms--:: Prowl cut off, sounding tired and nervous. In a moment he came back,:: Sorry, Blitzwing’s going crazy about something and Minimus is complaining about the lack of a command structure.::

:: Who?::

:: I think I inherited Optimus’ strays until he comes back, and I can’t organize anyone to go out and look for him,:: Prowl grumbled as an add-on.

“You go,” Sentinel growled into his audial, “This is your way in, We’ll draw a line between the fighting and their little hideout. Optimus should be somewhere there...”

Sentinel's hand dipped forward, sliding down and along one of Jazz’s headlights causing the Major to shudder lightly.

Frag Sentinel. Frag Sentinel. Frag Sentinel.

:: I’m heading into the city now,:: Jazz tried to make himself sound happy; excited to see Prowl even,:: Tell me where you’re hidden Prowl and I’ll see if I can find Optimus on my way,::

Sentinel pressed his lips to Jazz’s cheek and smirked against the sensitive metal.

With little more to do other than wait for Jazz to arrive with Optimus, they were given permission to rest.

“Zis way!” Blitzwing cackled, grinning wildly.

“Slow down Bolts for brains, my legs are like a quarter the size of yours,” Bumblebee chided back, jogging lightly behind the eccentric warframe.

Slowly they delved further into the twisted hallways. Blitzwing's laughter echoed through the corridors that stretched underground. The air became stale fast, drying out with dust the further they progressed. The hallways stretched on until they became crowded with doors.

Eventually, Blitzwing came to a worn looking door, bouncing up and down in a childlike display. Bee couldn't discern anything interesting about this door in specific but Blitzwing apparently had.

“Okay okay! Blitzwing! What is it!” Bumblebee huffed examining the door with little interest, “looks like just another berthroom to me. What's the deal?”

Click-whir. Icy sighed, laying his hand on the access panel as if caressing an old friend. Having lost power long ago the door stubbornly stayed shut.

Blitzwing moved, delving his fingers into the seem of the door and pulled the panels apart with little struggle. Together, the two of them wandered into the small room.

The room reminded Bumblebee of the barracks back during his training days. Small and cramped with little to no personal items; the berth room was grossly sterile and devoid of any and all personalization.

Still, Blitzwing moved through the room with familiarity. His wings flicked to avoid objects on the walls as if they had been doing so for years.

Bumblebee hopped up and onto the old berth lining the one wall, laying himself out on the bed with little concern.

“Seems like a good enough place to recharge Blitzbutt,” Bumblebee mused, tucking his servos under his helm for a pillow, “What is this place anyways?”

“The pit of Kaon,” Blitzwing said. Blitzwing sat on the berth and turned to the side table, opening the drawer slowly.

“The what?” Bumblebee asked. Turning on his side he ran his servo along the Triple changer's lower back; tracing the transformation seams.

“Kaon's gladiator pit,” Blitzwing grumbled, rummaging through the drawer, “here.”

From the drawer, the larger mech produced a small disposable datapad. With a little convincing the thing sprang to life. On screen and unsightly advertisement sprang up. Colours clashed against one another as several mechs splayed fighting each other along the bottom.

THE PIT OF KAON DEATH MATCH

Bumblebee frowned, “So like a battle but for fun?”

Blitzwing shifted, looking at Bumblebee with an odd twinge to his optics.

“More like Murder for others entertainment,” Blitzwing grumbled. Slowly he dragged his servo down to the mechs at the bottom, “Zat is me, in the background. Megatron is here.”

Bumblebee looked over the mechs at the bottom, “It barely looks like you.”

“I vas young. Between ze mods and the triple changer program, I look a lot different now,”

Blitzwing looked over the add once more, “Bumblebee what do you think will happen when Optimus returns? I was thinking...”

Blitzwing's good optic dimmed as he looked back at the add.

“Did the Autobots make you do this?” Bumblebee traced his hand up the triple changer's arm.

Blitzwing gave no reply.

“I don't know a lot about the golden age...,” Bumblebee huffed, “So this whole building...?”

“They weren't called Autobots back zen. It's a long, complicated story,” Blitzwing grumbled, “When ze day came Megatron and Magazarak took over the arena zhere was really only two choices; Stay and fight with the rebellion or go crawling back to the mechs that had us kill each other for their own amusement.”

Bumblebee crawled himself up onto the triple changer's lap, resting his head on his chest, listening to the whirlwind of the spark there.

“This was your room,” Bumblebee said blatantly.

Blitzwing nodded.

“You scared of working with Autobots again?” Bumblebee whispered.

Blitzwing nodded.

“But you're bonded to one,” Bumblebee huffed.

Blitzwing nodded.

“You're an idiot,” Bumblebee grumbled, “you're actually an idiot. We should have just fragging ran away together.”

Blitzwing hummed, dropping the datapad and nuzzling the small mech in his lap.

“Perhaps,” Blitzwing mumbled, “Thank jou.”

Bumblebee smiled, “Why? I didn't do anything.”

“Listening.”

For a brief moment, Bumblebee's face contorted as if he was trying to concentrate on something. Eventually, he responded.

“Ya know, If we're gonna be al serious 'cuz we're gonna die soon or whatever I should thank you too,” Bumblebee fiddled with his thumbs as he continued, “Thanks for not dropping me off the roof.”

Click-whir. Random cackled wildly, wrapping his arms around Bumblebee and dragging him down on the berth.

“What?” Bumblebee defended, “I'm serious!”

“Zhat's Vhat's so funny!” Blitzwing choked out between laughing bursts.

Bumblebee scowled, but slowly he gave in. Eventually falling into a soft chuckle of his own.

“Come on big guy, let’s get some sleep.” Bumblebee hummed.

Chapter End Notes

Ahhh... feels good to be back in the grove.

Thank you, everyone, for your support again.

sorry this is so minimally edited, I got impatient and just wanted to post

and yes yes Blitzwing largely over simplified the situation pre-war but his and Bee's relationship doesn't focus on that kinda stuff so there wasn't a point going into it when OP and Megs are going to have to do it eventually.

Next time!

EVERYONE IS ANGRY AND NO ONE KNOWS WHAT TO DO

Also, Sentinel puts his plan into motion.

Chapter 26

Chapter Summary

everyone tying up some ends before things go to shit again
too bad things go to shit again.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Jou see zat?”

“Tarn.”

“- in ze north, Helex to ze south, Kaon and Vos to ze west, Tesaurus to ze east.”

Brainstorm put down his scope and sighed heavily, “We’re blocked in. We’re blocked in, oh slag.”

“Jou break ze news to Prowl,” Blitzwing grumbled, crossing his arms and flicking his wings as he turned.

Brainstorm sputtered, “Me? Why do I have to report something from *your patrol*?!”

Click-whir. Blitzwing giggled wildly, “I’d rather spend my last cycles interfacing!”

With that, the triple changer’s engines pulled up into a small purr as he took off back into the arena from their perch on an adjacent building.

“Frag,” Brainstorm grumbled, placing his hands on his hips.

:: Prowl?::

Jazz's voice came strongly over his short range comms. Standing up from his position across from Bulkhead, Prowl answered, trying to hide his relief.

:: Jazz! Where are you?::

:: I'm uh, I'm real close but I'm gonna need some help here:: Jazz's the was odd; heavy. It raised several alarms in his processor.

Bulkhead looked up at him from the repairs list and raised his Optics in question.

“Jazz,” Prowl answered, “He’s close and needs help. Come on.”

It took little more encouragement to get Bulkhead off of the Orion and out into the structure they had been settled in for the last few hours.

Immediately Jazz's frame stood out in one of the entrances-- *and someone was with him*. Their silhouettes cut through the early morning light. With the shadows of both moons casting over them and the beginning morning light, it was hard to distinguish the frames from one another. It was only the outline of a very familiar hammer that gave away the other mechs identity.

Optimus.

Jazz smiled weakly, propping the larger mech up and supporting them both as he walked forward.

Optimus looked bad; pure and plainly. His left hip joint was completely mangled by some shot to his side. It was possible there was a sword wound there too but it was hard to tell. His shoulder was in the condition and bright pink energon covered his frame-- some of which may have not been his own. The large mech was covered in dents; to the point they buckled together along one of Optimus' scars, ripping it open. His jetpack hung by threads on his back, but the Magnus hammer still held firm in his grasp. His optics flickered but steadied some when he saw Prowl.

"Jazz! Optimus!"

Both him and Bulkhead charged forward, moving in to help the small white mech. Bulkhead took Optimus and aided as they all walked slowly towards the entrance to the lower levels.

"Jazz, what's the situation back with the Autobots? Optimus, I have to tell you about a message we received earlier it's urgent!" Prowl started but before Jazz could respond, Optimus interrupted.

"Get everyone together, preferably somewhere I can lay down and we can talk then," His voice was weaker than Prowl remembered, but still the command was there.

Prowl commed the others.

And just like that the weight of command fell from Prowl's shoulders and fell on to Optimus' mangled frame.

"Prowl," Jazz whispered; barely audible over their pede steps, "You can't mean we're going to follow that mess of a mech?"

"That mess of a mech would have killed Megatron if Tarn hadn't reared his ugly head," Prowl whispered back, "And he's the only one who can fix this whole mess."

Jazz pulled back at the response but he kept in step with the group as they continued their decent.

"Bossbot!" Bumblebee cheerily chirped as they entered the lower tunnels but it slowly turned to concern, "... Bossbot?"

"Is there a Medical station here?" Optimus asked, still leaning on Bulkhead.

"I-I'll Ask Blitzwing!" Bumblebee stuttered before shooting off.

Optimus shifted awkwardly, "Has Blitzwing been..."

It was Bulkhead who answered this time, taking over as the injured mech trailed off, "Helpful. Good. The two of them get along well he hasn't done anything... wrong yet."

Optimus dropped the issue.

"Um, Just a heads up he's not the only Decepticon around," Prowl added, poking his head around Bulkhead.

Optimus gave him a dirty confused look.

“His name is Brainstorm,” Prowl explained, “He’s a good mech. Eccentric-- he got me out of a tight spot.”

“Was he the large multi-colored frame?” Jazz asked.

“No, that was Minimus Ambus-- another escapee.... He's got a few quirks of his own,” Prowl motioned as if trying to explain further with his hands.

Optimus’ half glare turned into one of pure confusion. More concerning was the continued flickering of his left optic.

“A lot happened,” Jazz shrugged when Prowl failed to answer, “We can get caught up with everyone.”

Optimus thought for a moment, “Ten is not a bad number, much more than I thought we would have.”

There was a silent pause between them.

“Eight,” Prowl corrected.

It was Optimus’ turn to look around Bulkhead, “*What do you mean eight?*”

His intense glare was only aided by his bent frame, making him look much more worn and Savage than he really was. Slowly, a bubble of energon escaped his lips.

Prowl shuddered.

“Prowl and I, Bulkhead, Bee and Blitzwing, Brainstorm, Minimus and well... you?”

“Where the *fuck* is--”

Bumblebee came dashing around the corner right at the best moment. The small yellow mech waved them down a small hallway that grew into a wider room. Lining the walls open medical stations filled the room. Blitzwing was already at one hanging tarps around it.

“Optimus Prime!” Minimus entered the room behind them offering a salute with his free hand as he did so. In the other servo, he held a large blaster pulled from Brainstorm's armor.

“It’s just Optimus--”

Optimus gave a shudder suddenly, turning in on himself. A gush of Energon burst from his side.

“Get him to a berth! His self-repair platelets let go!” Jazz commanded.

Shockwave's lab was a welcome familiarity. In a sense at least, Of course, the lab was temporary; set up in an alcove on the Nemesis but still, It held the usual sanitary and off-putting feeling of Shockwave’s work. Shockwave himself was set to work on the Allspark. Megatron strutted into the lab Shockwave turned around on his chair and bowed his helm slightly.

“My Lord,” He said, raising his helm back up, “It is good to see you up and repaired once more.”

Megatron waved it off, moving closer to the Allspark and running a servo over its casing, “Mostly only dents and electrical damage. Critical on the short term, almost inconsequential once a competent medic gets involved. Besides, berth rest is a luxury I don’t really have the privilege of. I’ve been gone long enough for Strika to file a formal complaint against the air commander this time.”

“As was expected,” Shockwave returned his gaze to the Allspark and put his tools down beside it, “I’m assuming this is a visit of a private manner?”

Megatron dragged his servo over the Allspark again, “You’d be correct. I’m assuming upon my return to command that Strika may have some choice words about me trusting an Autobot for such a long period of time. I expected the same treatment from Starscream but he’s been uncharacteristically quiet as of late.”

Shockwave nodded, encouraging Megatron to continue.

“Either way I don’t think they’d approve of me reaching out to Optimus once more.”

Shockwave paused and for a brief moment, Megatron thought he might object to the notion also. Instead, Shockwave nodded and stood, motioning for Megatron to follow him into another section of the lab.

“I have already submitted a report on my findings to Strika as per your orders but I believe this calls for a brief run through of its contents, if I may, my Lord.” Shockwave brushed past a tarp, revealing a small portioned off section of the lab. In it sat nothing more than a monitor, some diagnostic wiring and a medical berth. On top of it sat a small blue Autobot; painfully lanky and in some sort of induced stasis.

“Proceed,” Megatron encouraged.

“Agent Blur was involved in the small group Optimus had gotten in contact with on earth using a primitive form of human messaging. In that Time he, along with four other named Autobots aided minimally in Optimus’ pursuits here on Cybertron. In doing so he had gained access to their used short-range Comm frequency. By hacking into his comm array it was possible to gain not only their location but their real-time chat log”

Shockwave moved to the console, avoiding the wires that strung Blurr’s open processor to the monitor. Typing swiftly a log of dialog appeared on the screen along with a quiet voice display.

“Anything of note?” Megatron inquired, dragging his gaze back to the splayed Autobot on the table.

Shockwave typed another string of commands into the console and a chat log came up, “Again, already submitted as a report; it seems Optimus has rejoined them, though he still remains off the frequency. Two of the Autobots were discussing it earlier. If you wish to contact Optimus privately I would suggest using Agent Blur as a surrogate and contact his team. With Optimus’ protective streak I don’t believe it would take long for him to answer your hail.”

Megatron thought it over, “You seem to be pretty relaxed over this idea.”

Shockwave nodded stiffly, “I take orders from you, my Lord. I have no reason to question your judgment. Besides, I am... aware of your affections towards Optimus.”

Megatron stalled, “Affections? They’re nothing more than a strategic interest.”

The stalling of his systems and the awkward stutter of his fans gave a different answer.

“As long as you do remember what your goal is and stick to it I see no harm in pursuing an interest of such nature,” Shockwave almost said the words with a hard weight to them. Slowly, as if unsure of himself, he motioned to the blue mech on the table.

Oh.

“You and the Autobot?” Megatron questioned.

“When I masqueraded as Longarm yes,” Shockwave admitted as if being scolded by his creator, “I grew quite fond of him, and the idea of simply offlining him causes me distress. In a more likely scenario, I hope it possible to keep him around even for a singular use such as this.”

Megatron gave the small mech another look over, his tank flipping at the idea. At some point, he probably would have permitted the idea. Someone like Blurr would have been a prime candidate for some sort of low-level working position.

Now though, the concept made his tanks awkwardly twist. The idea of Optimus forced down under his pede in anything other than a harsh battle did things to his processor he didn't wish to acknowledge.

“If you were to keep him simply for yourself,” Megatron asked, “What exactly do you plan to do with him.”

“I am not Blitzwing,” Shockwave defended, laying a hand on the small mech's chest, “I do not plan on abandoning my post at the first chance I get.”

Megatron kept his tone neutral, “I know and I trust you Shockwave. I am still curious.”

“With all due respect Lord Megatron, I don't take to theorizing about impossibilities.”

Whether or not Shockwave was telling the truth it was apparent he had nothing more to say on the subject.

“So tell me, how do I send a message in this infernal contraption.”

Ratchet would never admit Megatron was smart. Ever. Not out loud at the very least. But if Megatron was 'not smart' that put Turmoil safely in the 'likely had his brain module eaten out by scraplets in his youth' category.

That was safely assumed by one simple fact; though it could be solidified by multiple.

Ratchet would safely describe himself as not attractive.

So the fact Turmoil had collared and chained him in his private quarters not only gave Ratchet an idea for his intended purpose but also convinced him Turmoil was fucking insane. It also gave him a creek in his spinal strut- though he wouldn't be sure if it was from the violent mech's treatment or from his old age.

Luckily, or unluckily depending on one's point of view, Turmoil hadn't had the time to stay. There was a war going on after all.

Which gave Ratchet the time to figure out his escape plan. The chain only ran about the length of the berth, meaning it would be impossible to reach the door without cutting it.

Turmoil's quarters were scarce. But like any good Decepticon he kept a few daggers lying around; mainly in a bedside drawer (along with some other items Ratchet decided he wouldn't think too hard about).

Though a metal dagger meant to slash the cabling of a mech's throat wasn't going to cut a chain.

Ratchet's had a different use for it.

Turmoil was legitimately stupid. Perhaps maybe his head had been elsewhere at the time; again something Ratchet didn't want to ponder. There was a reason chains and other mechanical restraints had fallen out of fashion millions of years ago in favour of stasis and immobility devices.

They could be easily Tampered with.

Ratchet dug the knife into his forearm, propping the plating up and bending it an odd angle. Grimacing he reminded himself he needed to only do this to one arm. If he could just get through this, he would be fine.

Removing the magnets from his forearm would be painful, but it would be worth it and an easy repair to boot.

It took longer than he would have wanted it too. Bracing every few moments to steady himself delayed his work but eventually, he pulled both small magnets and placed them to the side. No energon lines cut, and his wiring still intact. Good.

Time to pull out the wiring.

With his weapons offline it would be impossible to use them as a power source. But connecting the magnets to his medical diagnostic suite solved the issue and soon enough he had the metal of the placed between the magnets.

Not too long after the metal cooled to a brittle temperature. It took only a hard *swack* on the headboard to break the chain; leaving part of it dangling from his neck.

Gathering the pieces of himself back up Ratchet moved to the door; opening it slightly before slipping through into the Hall.

It was at least quiet as expected. With most mechs down on the ground, or in the Decepticon's case sky, the ship was eerily quiet. Still, Ratchet was not an idiot.

Any medical staff and a few soldiers would still be on board. Ratchet stuck to the walls as he chose a direction. No point in dallying with Optimus in as bad condition as he was. The halls were eerily quiet as he picked a direction and simply walked, monitoring the walls for any security.

All he needed to do was find a way to the landing bay or an emergency exit. From there it was only a matter of heading North. With any luck, he'd be able to meet up with the bulk of their group along the way.

Yeah well, he hadn't been the luckiest mech lately if Deadlock's interest was any indicator.

Voices pulled him from the mental map of the ship he had been running through in his head. To his benefit though Decepticon ships had the added benefit of being stupidly (Ah, there was that

adjective again) massive in every indication. And so as the voices approached around a bend Ratchet easily slid himself into a 'small' vent using the dagger he had kept with him.

Despite the dust of the vent huffing into his vents, Ratchet fell still as they passed. Stalling his engines and vents to make himself quieter, the two mechs kept walking.

One more step-

Just a little further-

They stopped.

The sound of moving plating indicated a salute; the kind of salute that was drawn out not from respect but from fear. A soldier only saluted like that when they were nervous.

"-Thought Turmoil sent you-"

"Shut up," Deadlock growled out, "Does Turmoil look like he's here? No. He's Up at the Nemesis getting close with Megatron."

The grunt stammered as if attempting to speak but something was vibrating his vocalizer with earnest. Ratchet thought Bumblebee may have made a vibrator joke, '*Do you think he swallowed his interface aid by accident?*'

"Turmoil isn't here and that means I'm in charge," Deadlock spat and the stammering stopped.

Ratchet moved slowly. It was almost agonizing with the slow pace he set but eventually, his servo made it to his mouth. The other brandished the dagger, up and in front of his face. Ratchet glared through the slots of the vent- making out any shapes he could. But the vent was dark-- the invading light from outside only confused the sensors on his optics, partially obscuring the image of the outside.

"Now if you'll excuse me, I have better things to attend to than babysitting," Deadlock's tone held no question. Both mechs that preoccupied the hall walked on with a pace too fast to be casual but just slow enough as to not concern their commanding officer.

Then, Deadlock moved.

One more step-

Just a little further-

He stopped.

Through the vent, cover Ratchet could make out a pair of sleek black and white thighs and for a moment the medic looked deeper into the vent. But the passage narrowed only a few feet to his left. And the only thing worse than being caught was being *stuck, unable to move and caught*.

"Now are you gonna come out of there or are you gonna make you fish you out?" Deadlock's tone shifted to something a lot more smooth; as if he was coaxing a child out of the vent rather than an old grumpy medic.

Ratchet didn't move.

"Ammeter," Deadlock cooed, "Now don't you think you're being a bit childish?"

The suddenly ripping off of the vent cover jarred Ratchet into bringing the knife closer into a defensive position. They both paused, holding still for a moment.

It was only then Ratchet realized Deadlock was bleeding.

“It’s the best I can do,” Brainstorm admitted. Slowly he pulled away from Optimus’ shuddering chassis, “Preceptor was always the biology guy.”

The bleeding had stopped at least but the electrical and mechanical damage would only get worse over time; even Optimus had to admit that to himself.

“Thank you Brainstorm,” Optimus mumbled, shifting on the large medical berth, “does anyone have an external monitor? I need to debug-”

“We need to talk,” Prowl interrupted, “We need to know what’s next, we need to move forward.”

Optimus looked around the small room. With Brainstorm, Prowl, Jazz, Bulkhead, and Minimus waiting patiently there really was no more time to dance around the problem.

“Without Ratchet to get me moving properly and without Blur as a runner, we’re at a severe disadvantage. We have an army at both our backs, both of which have a target specifically on me. The Autobots are also likely to be looking for Jazz, Prowl, and anyone from Trypticon while Megatron is Probably gunning for Blitzwing and Brainstorm,” His voice came out cold and factual. There was no time for emotions here. If there was he’d have to admit both Ratchet and Agent Blurr were dead. And that’s not something anyone seemingly wanted to talk about.

“Not to mention the DJD are at our doorstep,” Brainstorm added.

“The Autobot blockade runs almost an entire ring around Kaon,” Jazz interjected, “And it’s solid. They’re using old structures from when they drove the ‘Cons off Cybertron in the first place. They’re using Rodion, Vos, and Nyon as strongholds.”

“It would be helpful if Blitzwing was present,” Minimus grumbled.

“Then you go disturb them,” Prowl snaps back, “There is no way I’m getting between those two right now.”

Optimus cleared his throat, bringing their attention back to him, “so we’ve got two army’s to get through. With what we’ve got, it’s impossible.”

Bulkhead winced at the statement and the others held silent.

“The DJD don’t fail,” Optimus explained, “We wouldn’t make it past-”

Optimus didn’t notice the shift but when Jazz turned alarmed towards Prowl it was obvious something was off. The two of them shared a scared glance. Minimus eventually joined in on the confusion prompting Brainstorm to look at Optimus confused.

“What?” he asked.

“It’s ah,” Prowl stuttered awkwardly, “it’s a ping from Blur but it’s not-”

“It’s Megatron,” Jazz interjected, “he’s asking for you. Demanding.”

Optimus' response was immediate, "Patch me through."

"Optimus is that really...?" Brainstorm asked.

"Give me the fucking frequency."

Prowl nodded slowly and waited as Optimus came online on the channel.

:: Megatron,:: Optimus tried to lace the message with every hint of malice he could.

:: Optimus,:: Megatron acknowledged. Great. What a time for Megatron to start using his fragging name. It was odd, having Megatron's messages come through Blur's signal was off-putting but obviously, Shockwave's doing.

:: I'm sure I know what your first question is. The agent is very much alive and well,:: the statement was calm and cautious and Optimus pondered if it was a sign of hesitation.

Prowl and Jazz both relaxed some at the news but kept quiet.

:: As you've likely noticed I've sent the proper disciplinary measures to your doorstep. I would like to make you an offer,:: Megatron's tone was still off; odd in a way that raised red flags in his processor. It didn't take away from what Optimus was expecting; *surrender now and I'll spare those fools you call a team* -

:: I am taking a risk here. I would like to offer a chance to go back to the bargaining table, just you and I this time.::

Optimus's lines froze.

"Decline," Prowl says out loud, "He's lying. He'll get you alone and he'll kill you."

"Not to advocate for Megatron or anything but he did stick to the contract on earth," Bulkhead mumbled.

Jazz and Prowl shot him a glare.

"Long story," Bulkhead explained, "We had to make a work contract."

:: I'm not going to meet you in private Megatron. Not only for the piece of mind of my crew but for my own safety and for the avoidance of *previous encounters*:: Optimus countered.

Prowl gave him a confused look, but Jazz looked off, shifting at the suggestion.

Odd.

There was silence on the other end of the comms.

"You can't be considering this," Minimus said, "there's an imbalance here. He could just up and kill you!"

"It's surprising that he offered," Optimus admitted, "but I think I understand why. He's curious and he won't kill me until he has answers. If he didn't the DJD would have advanced already." Optimus motioned to his scars and the others seemed to understand save for Minimus and Brainstorm.

:: Bring the small yellow one with you,:: Megatron offered.

:: I won't budge on bringing both Prowl and Jazz with me,:: Optimus responded.

“Is that smart?” Prowl asked, “with just the three of us I don’t think we could handle Megatron in your condition.”

“If Megatron is willing to have a meeting instead of just sending Tarn in to kill us, we have a chance at talking. You two have the highest chance of making it out in one piece.” Optimus explained.

:: That's acceptable on the terms that I'm permitted to bring both Agent Blurr and another mech of my choice with me,::

:: Agreed. We can meet at the base of the Northernmost tower. It's not far from my current position.::

:: You have 5 hours:: Megatron cut the line.

“You can’t be serious!” Prowl yelled.

“I can, and am,” Optimus fell back on a commanding tone, “Our chances are impossible if we don’t. Now go get prepared. Brainstorm, I need your help splinting my hip and shoulder.”

“Please tell me you have a plan,” Jazz said. He drew slightly closer.

“The beginnings of one. Though this meeting skews it a bit I have a general idea,” Optimus admitted, “I need more time to iron it out. I would appreciate both your and Blitzwing input once i have more information. In the meantime I need someone; preferably Prowl, Jazz or one of the fliers to keep an eye on Vos and Kaon for me.”

Prowl stepped out of the med bay with Jazz close in tow. They only made it a few steps outside of view before Prowl wheeled around. Without thinking further he wrapped his arms around Jazz, pulling him in close. Jazz responded by tucking his helm over Prowl's and pulling him close with the same desperation.

“You came,” He mumbled softly, only pulling away when the whirl of emotion calmed within him.

“Course I did Prowl, ”Jazz kept his hands set on the other's hips and smiled. It only took a moment for something to shift in his visor.

Tentatively Jazz pulled away, his arms falling to his side and he took a step back.

“What’s wrong?” Prowl asked, pulling his own limbs back to himself.

“We should get started.”

“Jazz, What’s wrong?” Prowl emphasized.

Jazz looked as if he was struggling with the words.

“Cliff is dead Prowl,” Jazz forced out, “I am so sorry, you got arrested and we had to figure out something-”

“He’s dead?” Prowl didn’t feel the words fall from his lips, “You said he was taken by the cons-”

“They shot him,” Jazz stated. There was still an odd twinge to his visor, but Prowl assumed it was warranted. “Cliffjumper and now Ratchet-”

“Don’t,” Prowl hissed, “We don’t know about Ratchet. He could still be out there.”

Jazz gritted his dental plates and balled his fists, “Look we all know what’s at stake here but you can’t be so hopeful when Optimus has already got two mechs killed. Not to mention the destruction he let Megatron bring.”

Prowl straightened himself, “What are you implying Jazz?”

Prowl almost regretted his accusing tone when Jazz stiffened but still, his resolve didn't break.

“What I’m saying is we’re going to die if we go along with-”

“Stop!” Prowl interjected and took a long, steadying vent, “Stop. Look. I don't know what changed but we made our choice. I'm a convict Jazz. I don't have anywhere else to go but here. And if I'm being honest stopping this time loop is our priority. It's what needs to be done.”

“Yes but there has to be another way!” Jazz protested, a bit louder now, “Help from high command!”

“Ultra Magnus arrested me Jazz. They have no interest in helping us,” Prowl turned to walk forward down the hall but Jazz grabbed his wrist and wheeled him around.

“This isn’t right and you know it!” Jazz was genuinely yelling now. Prowl had no doubt that Optimus and Brainstorm could hear them from the other room.

“What isn’t right,” Prowl ripped his arm away from Jazz, “Is throwing mechs in prison for selling high grade without a trial! What isn’t right is wanting to back down now!”

“Is this about swerves?” Jazz snapped, “I was under orders! You helped!”

“This isn’t about Swerve! This is about doing what's right despite the challenges that go along with it. This is about protecting people.” Prowl finished, his chassis huffing with the pressure.

“Inviting the Decepticons back to Cybertron isn’t protecting mechs,” Jazz gritted out.

“Then why are you here?” Prowl glared.

Jazz didn't say anything to that. Instead, they stood in silence.

“I’m going to ask Optimus to pull you off of the negotiations,” Prowl stated, “you can stay back here and help whatever plan he's got in the works.”

Prowl turned immediately to stalk back into the medical bay, leaving the cold of the hallway and Jazz to get intimately familiar with one another.

He paused in the doorway.

“I thought maybe... perhaps we had moved past this,” Prowl sighed, “just go back to Sentinel Jazz. If that's what you think is right.”

Prowl walked back into the medical bay.

Chapter End Notes

thank you so much for the support!

thank you so much to entangled wood, unknownXeno and Sanzaru for helping me
think out some stuff and just letting me vent

Next time! Back to the bargaining table

There's really no escape until he dies

Chapter Summary

Negotiations.

Setup.

Funtimes.

Chapter Notes

And he'll brace for battle in the night.

He'll fight because he knows he cannot hide.

Outrunning Karma by Alec Benjamin

(fits for a lot of characters in this fic tbh)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Bumblebee ran his tongue along the flared ridges of Blitzwing's spike. The Triple changer above him wiggled on the berth. Tentatively the larger mech places a hand on the back of Bee's helm; not pushing but simply placing, allowing the small mech to keep his own pace. The motion was gentle; intimate in a way only weeks ago Bee wouldn't have thought possible.

Bumblebee hummed encouragingly as charge danced over his glossa. His oral lubricant encouraged Blitzwing's spike to slide against his cheek on the occasional buck of the triple changer's hips.

“Bee,” His designation fell softly from Blitzwing's lips. It dripped over his audials, causing a shudder oh his own.

The hand on his helm caressed his horns with an encouraging pace though Bee still kept his own motions slow and teasing. Blitzwing bucked again, a small whine escaping his lips. An almost plead, but he wasn't quite there yet.

Bumblebee had every intention of getting the larger mech to beg before someone came to kill them.

It was odd how death could be an aphrodisiac.

Bumblebee supposed when you thought you were likely about to die it was easy to let loose.

Bumblebee brought his mouth back up the large spike and ran his glossa along the sensor cluster

there. Blitzwing let out a desperate cry this time, venting heavily.

Bumblebee pulled away, “relax Blitzy.”

“Jou and your infernal teasing,” Blitzwing hissed at him. The noise was more desperate than angry but the usual Decepticon threat was there. Though ever since they bonded Bumblebee wasn't concerned with it. Ever since then they just kinda *fit* together.

Blitzwing jolted his hips, this time smirking as his spike hit the kneeling mechs face.

It surprised Bee who pouted afterward. Blitzwing took the chance to rub his spike slowly over the smaller mech's bottom lip.

Yes. Bumblebee thought *if these are our last moments so be it.*

Blitzwing's part of the bond pulsed back in calm support. *Yes*, he could almost hear Blitzwing agree with him, *This is where we should be. No war. Just us.*

Light broke into the room.

Blitzwing was the first to react, pulling Bumblebee to his chest and tilting himself on the berth to cover them both. With a soft *click-whir*, the triple changer was growling not only his vocalizer but his engines as well at the intruder.

Bumblebee closed his optics and waited.

“Ah,” the voice that came from the door was soft, more hesitant than anything. But most importantly it was familiar.

Familiar and distinctly not the DJD.

“Optimus wants you guys to come out now, we're moving out soon.” Bumblebee wiggled his way up Blitzwing's armor to and peeked his head over the larger mech's shoulder and towards the light of the hallway.

“Ever heard of knocking?!”

“I did,” Minimus stated, “Several times. But Optimus is headed out and we can't wait any longer.”

Blitzwing let out another low rumble. This time slightly less threatening but the warning of violence was still very clear.

“We'll be out in a minute!” Bumblebee chirped, half trying to calm the irritated mech below him and half confirming their arrival.

Minimus gave pause but eventually nodded in acknowledgment. His servo hesitated as he shut the door, casting the room back into the comfy dim light.

Blitzwing's growl turned into a low rumble. Slowly he guided Bumblebee down back to his chest and held him there. “Ve have to go,” he mumbled softly.

“Yeah,” Bumblebee sighed back.

There wasn't a lot of talking as Prowl, Jazz and Optimus left the arena. With only a passing command to the rest of them to wait for their signal, the three of them transformed.

Kaon was a mess. At maximum, it had only been a rotation since they had arrived, yet the destruction of Kaon had been swift. Already, between the buildings, the makeshift Decepticon line was forming. Made up of ships and building materials the line was forming fast and with a strong tactical momentum.

Optimus wondered why Ultra Magnus hadn't moved to attack it yet.

Optimus sped up.

Prowl followed suit, pulling up almost beside them as they headed north. Jazz trailed behind but kept a close enough pace to not be worrying.

' why? Why am I still coming with you? ' Jazz had asked as they prepared to leave.

'Because I have a plan.' Optimus had replied blatantly.

A plan? Yes. A delicate, hinging on a few variables that may or may not work kind of plan. But a plan nonetheless. The rest of it they would just have to wing. And if it didn't work out? If they were walking straight into a waiting death trap?

The possibility that starting this whole thing over was a good thing had already crossed his processor. But he would never say that out loud.

Well, maybe he may have told Ratchet...

Ratchet.

Focus.

The confirmation from Brainstorm that Vos had moved north was the first piece of the puzzle to move in his favor. After that, it was just a matter of the negotiations going in the right direction. Then maybe, *maybe* they could all make it out alive. But he would have to play his cards right.

So in truth, Jazz's outburst had worried him. Though seemingly not as much as it had both Ed Prowl, who barely acknowledged the other. It was a fracture that would have to be dealt with sooner than later. But it would have to wait. A lot of things were going to have to wait until after this meeting.

Blitzwing, Brainstorm, Jazz, crossing the Autobot barricade... Yeah, a lot of things.

They approached the northern meeting point with a quarter of an hour to spare. With no doubt that Megatron wouldn't be far behind if he wasn't there already, Optimus found himself dreading the situation more and more. There was a high possibility the warlord was waiting in the shadows; ambush in the wings. Optimus found himself having a hard time caring if he was.

They transformed, following Optimus' lead as he unfolded. He knelt for a good moment, that pain of his barely mended injuries burning with the strain of being used so much. But as the pain ebbed away he put a hand on his hip and partially manually moved the joint to an upright position.

Jazz and Prowl watched him nervously, the concern obvious on their faceplates. Their thoughts were almost glaring at him.

There was absolutely no way Optimus could take on one 'con let alone the slag maker himself.

They were relying on speed if this thing went sour, and Optimus wasn't fast. Not with both a busted hip and shoulder joint.

No one dwelled on the thought for very long.

The soft hum of flight engines brought all of their attention to the sky. A jet familiarly painted deep grey and purple coasted closely. Immediately in front of him, the recognizable form of Megatron's alt mode took lead. They transformed mid-air and both Megatron and Starscream landed with **CRACK** that shook the road under them.

No one spoke for a moment. Optimus tore his attention away from both Decepticons looking for their sixth guest to arrive.

Come on, I know you pulled him off watch duty for a reason...

It was delayed, given the speed flight frames could achieve but eventually, turning slowly from around a building the silhouette of a creeping purple tank approached.

Optimus' vents hitched, another small cluster of errors clouding his Debug log. The tank approached, and slowly it's transformation sequence began, unfurling the massive frame of Optimus' worst reflux right in front of them.

Tarn stretched as he approached. It was entirely on purpose too, Optimus wouldn't put it past Megatron to purposely tell Tarn to scare the living protoform out of him after all.

He wanted to shake, to run. He *needed* to. Tarn could and would torture him again, for months and months and months and it wouldn't end and he'd be stuck and there's no way he'd be able to stop it. Not like this. Not in this condition.

He couldn't stop the slight tremors on his servos, but he could fend off the running instinct well enough. And by well enough he really meant barely enough to get through a conversation.

He'd known the risk when he'd taken up the brand. He'd just have to deal with it until the rest of them made their move.

"Optimus," Megatron's voice hummed over him, snaking over his joints and amplifying the shiver in his frame, "I believe you and I need to talk."

"I believe you and I need to talk."

Red flag one.

As soon as they had shown up, something struck him as obviously wrong. Alright, so perhaps a lot of things. Even as them mech before him stayed silent, Megatron had been compiling a list.

It started when they had spotted them. Though save for a few scratches, dents and minor injuries the mechs with him seemed in good condition. Nothing wrong there. But it was Optimus' condition that struck him as wrong. He had expected makeshift repairs, maybe a medic still screaming at him to get back to berth rather than fight a war Lord but this?

This was pathetic.

Where was their medic? Optimus looked like he could barely stand let alone put up a fight. The braces on his shoulder and hip, if you could call them that, were little more than the pistons from guns and armor pieces haphazardly thrown together to mimic joint movement. His mobility, his power, his... everything would be hindered by the braces, but they kept him standing.

It was obvious Optimus' hadn't had medical treatment.

“Your medic slacking off?” Megatron forced a smirk that felt completely wrong onto his faceplates. Optimus was smart enough not to delay repairs like this, and from intelligence gathered the rest of the mech's with him seemed in decent shape.

The comment meant to poke a little, just an inquiry. But the words seemed to jab at the mech in front of him and Optimus' faceplates twisted into a harsh scowl.

“Why did you want to see me Megatron? I assumed I'd be first in your torture-and-murder list.”

And he would be if any of his generals had a say in it. Instead, Megatron raised his sword, bringing it from his hip and aiming it towards Optimus in an accusatory point.

“When,” Megatron asked calmly, “and Why?”

Optimus' optic stayed firmly on Tarn beside him. Good. Tarn was just as off-putting as he wanted to be. Just as he expected, Optimus was a lot more likely to run if threatened rather than fight. And with his joints so mangled, running wasn't an option either. So what was left?

Surrender.

Megatron had thought he had cornered him, and chances were Optimus knew it.

And that brought him to Red flag two.

The hammer wasn't here.

Which meant, because Megatron wasn't a fool, that he had handed it off to someone else in their merry gang. And by proxy, that Optimus was, in fact, planning something; ever the opportunist.

“Tell me and I may spare the mechs who have joined you,” because that was more of a threat to Optimus than one on his own life.

Megatron *had* to curb whatever plan this was. Was Optimus an absolute imbecile? Trying something with his team surrounded and Tarn *right in front of him* ?

The answer was no. Optimus wasn't stupid in any sense of the word. Not if his rebellion was an indicator. So that meant, worst case scenario, that Optimus had expected Megatron would bring Tarn along.

All of a sudden Megatron was doubting whatever had possessed him to call this meeting in the first place.

“I want something in return,” Optimus ground out, finally tearing his attention back to the Warlord.

His immediate response was *anything* . Because somewhere, deep down he wanted to fix this, wanted to make things right despite his own consequences. Because it was entirely possible whatever plan Optimus has pulled together was going to get him killed. But that's why he had

insisted Starscream come along-

“You’re hardly in any position to make demands Autobot,” Just on time to prevent Megatron making a fool of himself.

“I think I am,” Optimus spat back, “I have information Megatron wants, and he has things I need. The definition of a negotiation.”

Starscream puffed up in a way Megatron recognized as preparing for one of his namesake screaming matches; something that wouldn't be beneficial to anyone in the situation. In response, Megatron put out an arm, smirks and aimed to calm the situation.

“Humor him, would you Starscream? Call me curious,” he drawled out.

Optimus took a vent, shifted on his good leg as if trying to find a more intimidating position and spoke, “Passage to Iacon. Amnesty for Blitzwing and Brainstorm. The return of Ratchet.”

Oh, frag. Oh, frag. That whole request was a red flag.

Logic. Stick to the logic of the situation, how do you make this work?

Their medic was missing? Dead more likely. That... well, that explained some things? The request explained Optimus’ condition at least. It certainly threw most negotiations out the window. If the medic was dead, and that was the most likely outcome, the likelihood of the ex-prime’s co-operation went down the drain.

Amnesty he could rationalize. ‘Don’t kill his mechs,’ was an easy enough demand to justify to his generals. Well, perhaps Tarn may have a few choice words about it in private but nothing more than that. Though the wording was odd, only Blitzwing and Brainstorm? Not himself? Something about that felt off. Part of this plan maybe?

“Why Iacon?” Starscream rolled his wrist in encouragement. But there was an odd stiffness to the motion, more honesty in his tone than usual.

Megatron weighed the causes and came to a simple conclusion; Starscream had come to a similar conclusion he had.

Tarn, not knowing the situation likely had not. If he had, it was likely he already would have moved to do something about it.

Megatron couldn't let that happen.

“The hall of records. I'm looking for something there,” Optimus said.

“And what might that be?” Megatron coaxed.

“Information after we agree, Megatron. Do we have a deal or not?”

Tarn scoffed, rolling his engine over and leaning towards the mech in front of them. And Megatron supposed that was his fault, he had, after all, told Tarn he was here to intimidate Optimus.

The small mech pulled back, oddly enough. That rare panic blatantly displayed as the enforcer pulled into his personal space.

“As if Lord Megatron would make a deal with a filthy traitor like you.”

The white one took a half step back.

Optimus' good servo aborted a movement towards his helm.

Whatever plan it was it was starting.

"Tarn, back off--"

The command fell short though. In the distance, the flash of some sort of light against the silhouette of buildings caught his eye.

The two mech's with Optimus shot backward, and Megatron felt the control of the situation slip through whatever grasp he thought he had.

Optimus pulled out his ax. Flipping some form of switch on the brace in a smooth motion locking the limb in place as Tarn watched his two companions make a bolt for it. With his one good arm, he swung the thing, flinging it and logging it into Tarn's plating.

Another set of flashes on the horizon had Starscream screeching something to Tarn. Megatron paid little mind, attempting to get between the fight breaking out in front of them.

"**AUTOBOT**."

Megatron wasn't fast enough.

Optimus couldn't fall with his leg locked into place like that, but the rest of his body slumped with the aftershock of Tarn's single word directed at him. The powered ax flickered offline and fell to the ground between them.

"Do Not Kill him!" Megatron ordered, placing a servo onto Tarn's tracks and yanking backward.

Optimus optics weren't online.

Had his colors always been that dull?

No no no-

If he hadn't brought Tarn along... What was he expecting? Megatron couldn't get the rational to form anymore. Optimus had tried to sneak his way around every single situation, Why had he expected this to be different? To convince Optimus to surrender?

Since when had Optimus done anything that wasn't an effort to save others.

Optimus had come here on a chance, on the slim chance that this may offer some sort of solution. There was no way this wasn't just some last grasp at straws, the state of Optimus proved it. And what was the catalyst? Tarn's appearance? Had it not been a member of the DJD would have this gone down in a different manner?

Optimus had some sort of history with them it seemed, more than the usual Decepticon fear.

Somehow Megatron felt as if he should have pieced a lot of this together a lot earlier.

And somehow that explained a lot of why things had gone wrong between them. Small pieces Megatron had forced into places they didn't fit, like a jigsaw puzzle. And this entire time Megatron was frustrated with all the pieces being white, so he crammed them together, forcing situations where they hadn't needed to be. And Optimus had come along, simply flipping the pieces over to

reveal the pattern on the back of them.

Had every attempt to talk to each other ended in disaster?

The unmistakable sounds of approaching jet engines ripped his gaze upward to the approaching purple and yellow mass that brought a new wave of panic to his spark.

He stepped forward, taking off towards the retreating mechs as Blitzwing pulled closer towards them. Those mechs were his last lifeline. With (*no, there's a chance here*) - If Optimus was dead they were his last link to answering his questions.

His last link to finding out *why* Optimus had done what he had done.

It was a grasp at almost nothing. As if mechs who just had their own last chance die were going to be co-operative. But it was a chance.

Blitzwing swooped down without stopping and grabbed the two mechs as they ran. There was a brief pause as the small yellow one pulled on Blitzwing's kibble with some urgency but it was just that. And soon enough Blitzwing had taken off once again.

"Starscream! Follow them!"

Starscream hopped up and transformed. His thrusters engaged and-

"STARSCREAM!" A familiar squeal came from their left. All three mechs turned towards the noise just in time to

A streak of purple and blue landed in front of them. Starscream's engines faltered and Megatron had the sinking feeling that this distraction had come a few seconds too late in Optimus' plan.

Had your whole plan hinged on those two idiots timing? Or were they an afterthought?

Skywarp beamed in front of them, "Starscream!"

Starscream transformed, looking between the two of his trine mates with something akin to pure astonishment, "...warp...TC?"

That situation could wait.

Megatron glanced over to the still unmoving mech pinned in front of a very annoyed Tarn. He had to double check, but Optimus' Cybertronian signal still pulsed an identification. It was slow, more of a low range affirmation of location than anything else but it was there.

He was alive.

"You told me they were dead!" Starscream screeched.

Megatron chose not to acknowledge the seeker behind him, instead of moving towards the ex-Prime.

"Are you even listening to me?!"

"Yell like that again at our Master and I will Shut you up for him!" Tarn snapped.

This ending didn't seem right. Call it his poetic side perhaps, or maybe the revolutionary in him but this small meeting seemed inappropriate for the small mech's defeat. Yet at the same time, he

couldn't just leave him here with the small hope someone would come back for him.

It was ghostly watching him stood stiffly like that. His upper half slumped forward, and his one leg locked by some contraption welded into his plating. Slowly, he leaned down and flicked the tab on the contraption. Optimus slumped forward, both knees going limp as he collapsed into Megatron's awaiting arm.

Optimus' had always been uncomfortable with his touch, but given the surrounding mechs... well, Megatron assumed he was the best candidate here.

The leg and shoulder would be a problem, though the braces seemed to limit their movement successfully, carrying him in any way that would jar the limbs would simply cause more damage. And now, with a closer look at the injuries, it was entirely possible they could open up once again. The repairs were shotty, done with no more than a soldering iron and... what seemed to be a high voltage welding tool of some sort.

"Starscream," Megatron ordered as he brought the small mech up to his chest, "Inform hook we have an injured mech."

The squabbling behind him came to an abrupt stop at the order.

"- Inform?! INFORM HOOK?! Has your processor melted?! YOU TOLD ME MY TRINE WAS DEAD!!" Starscream stalked forward, pushing past the mechs he was seemingly so concerned about.

Megatron didn't have the time.

"Tarn, Inform Hook we have an injured mech and that I am on my way to the med bay."

Tarn didn't hesitate, activating his comm array and barking into it.

"STOP IGNORING ME!" Starscream reached for him, gripping his shoulder tightly.

Really. He had no time for this.

"I will meet with all of three of you when we return to the Nemesis," Megatron rolled his shoulder free of his commander's grip and engaged his flight engines.

Starscream glared but glanced down to the small mech cradled in Megatron's arms. His lip curled into a sneer and he took a step back, "This better finally give us some answers."

"I'm sure we have all the pieces, just a matter of putting them together," He grumbled and finally he took off back towards the Nemesis.

"Don't you have your own god damned medic?"

Deadlock didn't verbally respond at first. Instead, continuing to watch carefully as Ratchet continued to dig through the tubing in his arm.

And to be honest, Ratchet already knew the answer to that question. The leak hadn't been caused by any sort of damage; no somehow the mech had completely ignored maintenance for so long the tubing had simply given way. Whatever repairs he had managed to give himself from battles or wear and tear, were crude mimics of proper medical attention. The conclusion was obvious.

Not only were the Decepticons struggling but they were running out of medics too.

And with no protoforms being built, no hot spots... no Vector Sigma... well, Ratchet could guess why Megatron had pushed so hard for this invasion.

“Shut up medic,” Deadlock hissed out as Ratchet seemingly pulled on a tangle of specifically delicate wiring.

Ratchet shut up. But that didn't mean he kept from scowling at the Decepticon's forearm. Deadlock's gun held tightly in his other servo at his side. Not yet a volatile threat, but still apparent between them.

Ratchet finally pulled the cracked tubing into a workable spot only for a brand new problem to stare him in the face. The tubing's crack laid along several injection sites. Scrap. Though not new, they definitely explained the weakness of that line specifically. They were older, but older didn't necessarily mean the mech was clean. Ratchet had enough experience in the dead end to know about that.

Now how do you bring up this kind of thing with a junkie with a gun?

“I'm gonna need to ask a few questions,” Ratchet mumbled. His servo's kept pace as he clamped the line.

“Just fix it.”

Ratchet took a quick vent.

Ratchet turned away from Deadlock and towards one of the cabinets. Producing two different types of tubing he swiveled back to the Decepticon and mustered the most intimidating scowl he could. His patient eyed the tubing with Optics meant to *encourage* his work pace.

“Look, I ain't gonna get into the medical bit of it but I can splice Lubricant tubing out in your energon line. It ain't gonna last as long but it's softer, it'll take small punctures with more grace than Energon lines will.”

Deadlock brought the gun up, resting it on his own plating casual save for its direction at the medic. Ratchet froze, still holding the tubing out to the Decepticon.

“The pit would you splice my tubing for? I said fix it, so hurry up and fix it,” Deadlock hissed, “I'm in a rush.”

He was going to have to spell this out, wasn't he?

“Your tubing cracked from overuse and pre-existing injections,” Ratchet glared, “Your *habit* caused the wear and tear.”

Deadlock seemed to understand that. Maybe too well.

He looked embarrassed for a moment, pulling up on the berth slightly but it was quickly brushed under another angry scowl. Ratchet couldn't even register the grab Deadlock made for his arm, swinging himself off the medical slab and beside Ratchet. The vice grips on his wrist pulled forward, forcing his servo onto the berth in front of them.

Deadlock had his gun pointed at his hand before Ratchet could even pull out of his daze. His battle protocols engaged just in time to register the pistol hovered over his smallest digit.

“Wait a click-!”

BANG!

He wretched back clutching his damaged digit, cursing in a flurry of screams and pain. Error messages piled into his HUD, warning of energon loss from the removed appendage. Electrical feedback burning through his sensor lines from the sensitive limbs.

“YOU SELFISH SACK OF ORGANIC SHIT!”

Deadlock didn't seem to care. If he did, he didn't show it. Instead, he kept the blaster close to his side. With a disinterested huff, he used the tip of it to flick off what remained of the removed digit from the berth before returning to his splayed position on the berth, laying his injured arm back out.

“Fix it,” Deadlock hissed once again, “And suggest I'm some leaker again and I'll remove a larger body part.”

Ratchet shivered but brought himself back towards the slab. He picked up the replacement tubing with his good hand.

Somehow Bludgeon wasn't seeming so bad right now.

Optimus had left the team back at the Arena with the Magnus Hammer. Something Jazz hadn't understood until he had explained the plan further.

Turns out Kaon, a distinctly less ranged mech on the DJD used electrical surges as his main weapon of choice. And what weapon did they have that could redirect electricity? The only thing they had to do was get Vos and Kaon separated and they had a chance to escape.

Luckily for them, Tarn had been called to Megatron's side, and Vos had taken his post in the north, leaving Kaon completely vulnerable.

So Brainstorm had taken the hammer. Jazz had tried to object, falling on deaf audials now. Ever since his outburst then entire group avoided his opinion as if he was sabotaging their only means of escape.

Well, either way, Brainstorm, and Minimus had taken the hammer and had distracted the red mech while Bulkhead, Blitzwing, and Bumblebee had taken the chance to get past. From there, Bulkhead had joined Brainstorm while Blitzwing had taken Bee to pick up Jazz and Prowl.

Because well. Optimus had been caught.

Sentinel Prime smiled at that.

“That idiot! Running around like he had a screw loose just to go out like that!” Sentinel laughed. The noise ran down Jazz's struts and straight to his spark.

“My only regret is that the ‘cons are the ones that got their hands on him. .”

Jazz cringed but kept his face neutral on the visual feed. But at least. Maybe. Maybe this was the end of it.

Please .

“Where can I cross back into Autobot territory?” because that's all he wanted now. To be back and safe. And to stop feeling so... so predatory towards the mechs around him.

Optimus was dealt with. Whether he died from Tarn's voice or Megatron killed him afterward didn't matter. Optimus going to die. Wasn't that enough?

“Where were you and that stupid group planning in crossing the border?”

Jazz kept the fear from his face, even as it pulled into his lines and into his joints.

Please no. Please don't make me do that to Prowl. Wasn't Optimus enough?

Sentinel's smirk died marginally. Whatever expression Jazz had failed to hide had somehow made the fragger in front of him concerned. If Sentinel could even feel concerned. Jazz had the sinking feeling it was the kind of concern you have watching some distant tragedy rather than one you have for someone close to you.

“What is it? That black two-wheeler you spend so much with?” Sentinel scoffed and Jazz wouldn't admit that the noise got to him.

It was. Mostly.

Minimus and Prowl were escaped convicts. Blitzwing and Brainstorm were Decepticons. Bumblebee and Bulkhead were fugitives.

But handing them all to a mech who wasn't above Killing to get what he wanted still felt wrong.

Wrong because he knew why they were trying so hard.

Sentinel huffed, crossing his arms on screen in an over-dramatic display. He dipped his head for a moment but took a breather.

“Fine, if it gets you to play nice until you get back, the two-wheeler can get sent to the stockades,” Sentinel seemed as if he was forcing the words out, “Can't guarantee the rest of them, but I'm sure I can get Ultra Magnus to take pity on him.”

Is this what his life had come to? Bargaining for the life of one mech on the off chance they don't get shot down the moment they enter the sights of the Autobot line?

Yes, it had. And Jazz didn't know who to blame more, or even if he should blame someone. Because this? This situation wasn't something an Autobot put another Autobot through. But those lines, those bold, strong lines that once defines Autobots as good and Decepticons as bad were gone. There wasn't really a difference anymore. Not when Sentinel could act like this; have people killed for his own motivations.

Not when Blitzwing was so overtly overprotective of Bumblebee. Not when Brainstorm braved Kaon to get them out safely.

Their lives for Prowl's and his own.

The two of them, or none of them.

“We're crossing towards Vos. Blitzwing is hoping we can hide in the taller spires of the city... whatever that means. I'll send you a coordinate update as we approach,” Jazz finally gave in.

“I’ll have Getaway meet you at the blockade,” Sentinel said.

Getaway .

Another thing he had to deal with.

Wow, when had he started feeling like Optimus?

“And Jazz?” Sentinel reached to cut the line and paused.

He didn't continue until Jazz acknowledged him with a soft, “Yes, Sentinel Prime sir?”

There was something there this time. A want in Sentinel's eyes that made jazz happy he wasn't there with him now. Jazz knew that look.

“You wanna do something for me?”

The answer was immediately no. Not here, not with the group preparing to set out once again only feet away. The fragile wall of some abandoned building the only thing separating them.

But Sentinel's optics rolled over him hungrily, and Jazz knew exactly what that look was about.

“Before you go Jazz, pop your panel for a moment, yeah?”

“Jazz?”

Jazz cut the feed, replacing it with a map of Kaon on the small monitor before turning to the voice behind him. Prowl stood in the slanted slit of an entrance to the small room.

He looked stoic, almost unconcerned with the way he found Jazz.

Indifference.

Why did that hurt more than anger?

“The flight frames just finished fueling-” because even Jazz could agree Calling them Decepticons felt wrong, “We’re moving out. Let's go.”

Jazz stood and made his way towards the gap.

Chapter End Notes

Its done. thank the lord. I promise i'm answering comments from last chapter tonight i am just a tired, sick human being.

thank you everyone so much for the support and comments!

Playing The Politics

Chapter Summary

Finding himself in for repairs and a meeting Optimus brings out his big guns; Proposing a fracture to the Decepticon forces. Starscream is on board now just convincing the other generals it's a half decent idea.

Someone save Ratchet from amputation.

Jazz.

Chapter Notes

I KNOW I DON'T ALWAYS ANSWER COMMENTS BUT I'M GONNAA THIS TIME I PROMISE

a Merry Mechanic Christmas

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Loop 54.

FIFTY... four. Big ol' five four. Loopdee doop fifty four. Over three hundred years in total, though Optimus didn't care much for calculating the exact time, though he must be climbing to almost three hundred and fifty now.

Though that didn't really matter, not in any significant way at least. Three hundred years, Three hundred stellar cycles really only made up about a sixth of his life at this point, and cybertronians tended to live much longer than that. He was sure that he had read somewhere that Ultra Magnus was forged something like 14 million stellar cycles ago. In short, he had time.

Too much time.

But again such trivial things were not much of importance.

Optimus was out of ideas.

Completely and utterly down to nothing. Though he did spend his spare time doing research on the topic, well as much as he could given earth's frankly primitive grasp on quantum mechanics. Between that and keeping his logs up to date it wasn't as if he had nothing to do. Yet he still couldn't bring himself to completely give up.

Though that option was looking more and more...inviting. But he couldn't lie, doing nothing meant unnecessary death. And no matter how many times he went through the repetitive years, the loss of life was something he aimed to prevent, especially if he aimed to have one of these loops become permanent.

With the catastrophe that was the last loop, Optimus was in no rush to jump back into that whole situation again. Now at least things could start over. He could relax these first few months, look into the Bumblebee and Blitzwing issue and get his bearings. Now, at least he was away from Tarn.

He stepped out of the stasis pod for the fifty-fourth time and-

His pede refused to move.

Optimus rolled his engine, his processor catching up slowly to the wakefulness of the rest of his body. He tried again, this time with the other one. It refused to move too, this time accompanied with a searing pain up the entire mechanism. Optimus' optics shot online.

Purple.

Well this wasn't the Orion. In fact-

"Would you stop that?!" Optimus' eyes darted to the mech beside him. The Decepticon, almost four times his own mass, glared down at him with an expression dangerously close to Ratchet's 'Stop undoing my work' glare. Between them, a slim cord connected them, medical port to medical port.

Optimus attempted to sit up. His hip protested with another flash of pain up his entire frame. The motion to push up did the same to his shoulder, resigning him to stay on the berth. Besides, the medic didn't seem much of a threat at the moment and it may be beneficial to take advantage of the supposed mistaken identity.

"I said stop moving! By the pit, I don't need more errors to deal with," the mech hissed back at him, culling him into laying back on the slab if only to placate the medic.

Helm laid back and systems now online he took the moment for a systems diagnostic. The medic's cord pinged at his firewalls several times jolting past them accessing the diagnostic Optimus had just requested.

Optimus steeled himself.

"Uncomfortable I know," the medic grumbled and motioned to the screen before him, "It would take days to fix the damage you've done to your systems kid. And I'm not talking physical; replacement parts can always be found. So tell me, when'd you overclock your processor?"

Optimus starred the medic down.

"Alright, let me rephrase that. How long have you manually been dealing with your error logs?"

In response all Optimus could muster to do was pull at his restraints weakly. The magnetic strips holding his limbs in place didn't relent though. And once again he was forced to confront the medic's question.

"A while."

"I'm not going to beat around the bush here. You've glitched."

"I know."

The medic didn't stop typing away at his console. At least now, with his systems, more alert and

online Optimus could make out the line of errors the medic was working through.

His errors.

“And you’ve been letting it fester?!” The medic hissed at the screen.

Optimus debated some sort of smart-ass answer. Something along the lines of ‘Oh well my medic is dead so..’ or perhaps ‘ask Megatron about that one.’ But thought better of it. No matter the situation angering a medic was always a bad idea.

Instead, he posed a question of his own, “Why am I here?”

Or more accurately, *why am I not dead?*

“Megatron ordered you repaired,” The mech’s scowl deepened, “He’s going to have to deal with some botched work. We don’t carry parts in your size. Surprise, surprise. And there is no way I can get through this entire error log. So you’ll just have to make do with the patch to bring your debugging automation back online.”, me

“Nothing from Shockwave I hope?” Optimus’ tried to his the genuine nervousness in his tone and failed.

The mech finally turned to him and offered a questioning expression.

“He has a habit of modifying processors.”

“No, this is all standard I assure you. Megatron wants you coherent when you talk to him.”

Megatron wanted to talk to him?

Optimus laid his head back and resigned himself, “Do what you have to then.”

The medic looked him over once more before returning to the code before him, “It won’t be much longer now.”

No, Optimus thought, It wouldn’t be.

Megatron stood against the glass of the observation deck. The background of the defensive line occasionally flickered with the exchange of rounds as Optimus stood in the doorway, not daring to approach. It was impossible to tell if Megatron knew he was even there. The datapad he held seemed to hold the entirety of his focus, permitting a few moments for Optimus to try and steady himself.

It did not negate the inevitable though. Megatron had his datapads, and Megatron knew the truth.

This loop was over. It was just a matter of Optimus to submit to the Warlord's sword and try again.

But not before reclaiming the datapads. In no way was he restarting without his one constant lifeline. Matrix or not.

“You mention a solution,” Megatron's voice lacked it's usual saunter, instead falling into something of a low, expressive tone. It confirmed that yes, Megatron knew he was there, but betrayed little else. Unreadable as always; time to assume the worst.

Optimus found himself unable to talk. His vocalizer clicked once, imitating that of a new spark, before silencing completely. His optics focused on the dual swords perched on Megatron's hips, his body no more willing to act than his processor.

“In your last entry,” Megatron turned towards him now, making an over exaggerated motion with his one servo towards the datapad, as if the object itself insulted him personally. “You mention Nova Prime giving you some sort of solution, but you fail to record *what* exactly it is. Only the fact it is in Iacon, and that you plan on using my army to get there.”

This situation was all too familiar; being brought to Megatron, confronted with what he had been hiding.

This route only had one end.

Megatron finally brought his gaze up, looking at Optimus with open interest, frustration pulling at the edge of his field.

This though, this openness, this full flare of his field was so new. It allowed Optimus to breathe; as if knowing how the Warlord felt he may have some solace in what was about to occur. And for the first time, Optimus didn't feel so alone facing his death.

It was a morbid thought; As if feeling Megatron's field brought him home comfort when that sword would puncture his spark chamber. It was only a matter of time now. He was scared yes. But comforted. Knowing. With his field so Open maybe Optimus may not awake with his spark in his throat the next loop, screaming for someone; anyone.

But he didn't feel alone this time.

“Where are they?” Optimus finally got out. Because that was his only other concern.

Megatron apparently had expected the question. He held Optimus' optics directly, rolled his shoulders back and lowered the datapad. His field changed, projecting a sort of reassurance with a hint of sincerity and he took a few steps forward.

“Headed towards Vos, as I assume per your instructions. Congratulations, save for Skywarp, or Thundercracker who refuses to leave my second's side, I don't have a mech who could reach them before they cross. I doubt my defenses there could stop them with both the hammer and Blitzwing on their side. They're safe from my reach. Agent Blur, on the other hand, is still in stasis under Shockwave's supervision. I've sent out a request to locate whatever we can find of your medic also.”

Optimus gaped openly at him.

“Call it a peace offering. Worst case scenario, you have the speedster returned to you and you can bury your medic properly.”

Optimus still didn't respond.

This was not how this was supposed to go.

Megatron's field pulled in, conflicted and confused. Optimus watched him shift back on the back of his pedes. It was the only show of weakness- of hesitation he could detect. It was oddly encouraging.

“How much have you read?” Optimus' voice came out more confident than he expected.

Another flicker from the horizon.

“Enough.”

Which wasn't enough of an explanation. Has he read about Starscream betraying him to Megatron's wrath? Grieving his teammates? What of their years fighting? Or worse, Tarn?

Was this why his death would be delayed? Did Megatron want him to go through the datapad with him?

Or maybe, perhaps, Megatron wanted him to achieve that solution. To stop this whole time loop so that his conquest may become permanent.

Yes. With his logic processes clearer and no longer throwing errors at him it was easier to think it through. They would find the solution, and then Megatron would kill him. Megatron was angry at him after all.

But wouldn't it be permanent then?

Optimus felt his engine hiccup.

These peace offerings were likely nothing more than a way to buy his trust. He was safe for now. Probably. But after they arrived? After they found the Matrix?

A sword to the spark. The burning hot pain. And then darkness.

And this time? No light of the Orion to greet him.

“Optimus?”

They locked optics again.

“Are you listening? I said we should work together. For real this time,” Megatron emphasized, “I don't need two Starscream's running about.”

“You kill Starscream.”

“Pardon?”

Optimus felt his own field flare wildly as he lost control, “You shoot Starscream through the spark! At least he's worthy enough to waste fuel cells on!”

Megatron stared dumbly at him.

“I am no fool Megatron! You don't have to read any of that slag,” he motioned wildly at the datapad, “to know I'm not going to allow you to make any of this, any of my mistakes permanent! You might as well end me here. You haven't hesitated before, but of course, you know victory is impossible without me now, That is the only reason I am alive and don't pretend it is not.”

Megatron snarled, his open field snapping in on itself. Optimus almost whined at its loss but caught the desperate noise in his vocalizer before it escaped.

“If my only goal here was conquest, I would have your spark extracted and held on life support for the rest of our combined functioning! Cease your assumptions or I may fall back on that plan anyways!”

And there it was. Familiar ground.

Something to lash out on. Not a peace offering that was more confusing than anything, but a true threat. It was as if he could ground himself in it, a ledge to springboard himself off of and on to a more secure platform.

And so he did.

Hook had made good use of what supplies he had. The oversized replacement joints only ground enough to be noticeable as Optimus launched himself unarmed at the Warlord. The patch welds held beautifully as well, making the motion almost completely painless.

“ALL YOU DO IS MURDER!” He couldn't escape the cry as he collided with the Warlord.

He aimed for the seams. It was a huge mistake.

Had Optimus thought through the motion for a few more beats he would have come up with a better plan of attack rather than ‘rip the warlord apart by the seams in a fit of rage’. Perhaps then he would have actually been able to grab the datapad or deal some actual damage.

But he hadn't.

And so Megatron grabbed his outstretched arm, aborting the motion in one definite swoop. His servo covered the smaller mech's entire forearm as he raised him up, bringing him to optic level.

“The solution, Optimus. What is it?”

Optimus spat in his optics.

Megatron let out a dangerous roll of his engines. It served as the only warning he had before being thrust against the wall violently.

“I agree to your terms Optimus.” Megatron hissed into his faceplates. His tone was visceral as if the words themselves hurt him to force out.

His processor still reeling from the motion Optimus only offered a confused look in response.

“You provided information,” Megatron brought the datapad back into view and waved it in his face, “And so you will have your passage to Iacon, your amnesty for your co-conspirators and your medic returned to you. Do not make me regret this.”

Megatron released him.

Optimus landed on his knees, his new hip joint protesting with a pang of hot pain. He looked up, only to meet Megatron's gaze.

Another flash from the military line in the distance.

“We go after your troops first, then you hand me a victory across the Autobot line and I will arrange an escort for you to Iacon. Are we clear?”

If Megatron thought he would go down without a fight he was sorely mistaken.

“Crystal.”

“Prepare something good. I will not be the only one you will need to impress,” Megatron tossed the

datapad in front of him, "I have already made myself a copy. You have an hour."

Optimus nodded.

Blurr found Starscream and the rest of his trine hauled up in their quarters.

When Thundercracker had answered the ping at their door it became obvious exactly why. The three of them had isolated themselves. Covered in paint transfers from his Trine mates, Thundercracker didn't seem too keen on being interrupted.

"What do you want Autobot?" he spat.

"Optimus sent me," Blur kept his calm, "I'm here to see the Winglord of Vos."

Thundercracker opened his mouth to say something, likely along the lines of shooping the mech away but another voice behind him interrupted.

"Send him in."

Thundercracker rolled his optics but stepped away from the door and motioned permissively into the room.

Arms crossed behind his back and posture straight, Blur stepped into the room as if visiting a foreign dignitary.

And if Optimus' information was correct, that's exactly what he was doing.

The lights were dim, emanating a soft orange glow over the room. Sprawled over the berth, lazily covered by an insulating cover Blurr found Starscream propped up in the berth. Skywarp laid at his side; arms wrapped around the Winglord's hips, rubbing small circles into his opposite joint.

Starscream didn't raise his optics from Skywarp, instead of watching his own servos trace seams along his trine mate's shoulder.

"No one's called me Winglord in a million years," Starscream's voice came out a low slur.

Thundercracker closed the door and walked awkwardly to the side of the berth and sat himself down.

"I like to do my research before infiltrating a hostile environment. And if I'm being completely honest I've been itching to get back to business after Shockwave finally pulled me up from Stasis. So I've read a lot up on you Lord Starscream of Vos."

All three seekers smiled, a display Blurr was sure was made to unnerve him. But Blurr was good at his job, and though it worked he locked down the emotional response to it.

"Smart mech," Thundercracker hummed.

"So tell me. What brings a mech like you all the way to the command quarters just to interrupt a post interface cuddle session?"

"Optimus does. He wants to make a deal. And if his tone of voice was any indication I'm thinking you may want to listen. Well, that and your past regarding Megatron."

Starscream raised his head and stared down the Blue mech, the sleepy mask draining from his face

at a much more quickened pace.

“And I suppose he’s not here because Megatron’s got him on lockdown. And this meeting is supposed to be secret?”

Blurr nodded.

“So get on with it then. You don't seem like one to hold your glossa.”

“Optimus is willing to go through with Megatron's original deal with you; return Vos to your command, along with the seeker armada. And all you have to do is back his decisions.”

Ratchet resigned himself.

Being re-chained to the berth was one thing. But Deadlock apparently had more solid plans. He was violent. Ratchet had made the mistake of ever thinking he could handle him and it had lead to... this.

This being the mess that used to be his forearms. Sure, they still functioned and in truth, the pain had dulled to an ache by now. Deadlock had ripped out his magnets in an attempt to keep him restrained this time. It left the plating on his arms stripped back and bare. Though violent it was done with deadly precision. It was terrifying how the large mech could both hold him down and accurately yank out the correct wires to disable his magnets and leave his motor functions still intact.

The worst was the smile.

Deadlock took some sort of sick pleasure in it, even mocking him for his missing pinky finger.

But he took it; held his ground. This wasn't the worst he'd been through and he doubted it would be the worst he'd face in the future.

Still, it left him here; he had given up struggling after he ripped his forearm coverings off.

He watched the bare mechanisms in his arms twitch and contract with every movement of his remaining digits. There was energon over the berth coverings, not enough to cause alarm but it would likely get there soon enough.

“It’s not reeeeeeally personal,” Deadlock hummed, dragging a digit over the collar around his neck, “I mean you did call me a leaker but... really this is more about ruining Turmoil new toy.”

Ratchet decided not to bring up just who had given him to Turmoil in the first place. Though appropriate it would likely only entice the mech further.

Deadlock laid beside him on the berth. Slowly he dragged an arm up his exposed circuitry forcing Ratchet to suppress a whimper.

They laid like that for a few clicks, side by side in a mockery of familiarity. Deadlock would have to eventually get bored, wouldn't he? But Deadlock leaving mean Turmoil was back. And if this was just a ‘second in command’ torture session, Ratchet wasn't exactly excited to see what Turmoil was capable of.

“A-meter,”

Ratchet didn't dignify him with a response.

“Pouty puss. Anyways. I noticed something,” Deadlock sat up, looking down at him and taking a break from caressing his circuits, “I've never seen an Autobot without a badge before.”

Ratchet grit his dentae balled his fists and stayed quiet.

Deadlock frowned for too innocently.

“Oh Ammeter, are we gonna have to get rid of another digit-”

There was a knock at the door.

Deadlock froze, his manic field pulling in. They laid in silence for a minute.

“Turmoil?” an unfamiliar voice came throughout the door.

Deadlock seemingly recognized him though and pulled himself to a stand. A small slip of relief left him, though Ratchet didn't know if that was a good or bad thing. He had misread the situation up until now anyway.

“Enter,” Deadlock straightened himself out and commanded.

The door slid open with an audible *snict*. In the exposed hallway, another Decepticon stood with his arms folded politely behind his back. He was an ungodly purple, with only minimal black details, screaming Decepticon on first sight. Though Ratchet focused on what was mostly some sort of intimidating display; the two almost bull-like horns on his head.

“Cyclonus,” Deadlock greeted with a hostile smirk. Ratchet didn't think him capable of greeting someone any other way.

Cyclonus ignored him though, instead focusing on Ratchet. Quickly, he looked away as if approaching on something he shouldn't have.

“Ratchet, is, this an inopportune time?” Cyclonus greeted as he stepped into the room.

Deadlock let out feral hiss, stalking around the bed and towards Cyclonus.

Cyclonus, apparently took offense to that, lowering his optics and putting his hand on the hilt of his sword in warning.

Looking more direct at the two of them now Cyclonus grumbled a soft ‘Primus you two...’ before snapping at Deadlock.

“This is not where I expected to find you two, nor in this condition,” Cyclonus spat out, “It seems I was fortunate to arrive when I did, I don't believe Ratchet would have enjoyed your ministrations for much longer.”

Deadlock stopped, actually catching the medic's name the second time around, “...Ratchet...?”

He had pulled himself into a more dignified position by now, getting himself sat up despite the chain still wrapped around his neck.

“You got the wrong mech,” when had his voice become so hoarse? “Name's Ammeter.”

“You’ve got the wrong mech Cyclonus,”

Ratchet pulled back when Cyclonus approached. Though that's all he did; come to the side of the bed, lean in, and look him over.

“Lord Megatron asks for 'Ratchet's' presence. Deadlock, you won't mind me taking this one just to be sure? And perhaps maybe I won't mention you've been creeping around in Turmoil's room.”

Deadlock came up the other side of the berth and Ratchet suddenly felt exceedingly claustrophobic between the two larger mechs.

They glared at each other as Deadlock growled, “Tell me if it's him or not.”

Cyclonus eyes Ratchet, meeting his gaze for a moment and holding it.

“Why are you lying to him?”

Ratchet brought a fist up, pain racking through him as it collided with Cyclonus' jaw.

Cyclonus staggered back a step, bringing his servo up to his jaw and grumbling to himself. Deadlock reacted first, reaching out off his arm and digging his digits into the sensitive wiring there.

Ratchet grunted in response, bringing his other servo towards Deadlock's face, only to have it caught too.

“Ain’t no way you're using me as some sort of bait,” Ratchet hissed.

“Ah,” Cyclonus rubbed his jaw, rumbling his engine softly to himself, “I forgot you hit so hard...”

Deadlock's eyes raked over him; accusatory. And then, dragged his eyes up to his forearms.

His grip softened.

“Is... is...”

“We need to go,” Cyclonus interrupted, “apologies for the rushed reunion but I really must be taking him. Megatron’s orders.”

Deadlock's grip tightened.

“Deadlock...”

“What does he want with a battlefield medic anyways? He doesn’t need him, find another medic. How’d you even know he was here?” the Decepticon's entire demeanor changed, his optics wider and more innocent. His grip was one of desperation rather than sadism; it had Ratchet wondering where the change had come from.

Cyclonus put his hand on the hilt of his sword again.

Deadlock bared his teeth.

“I ain’t going willingly,”

“You’re in no condition to fight back. You're in need of medical attention, which is a shame; you already have a patient waiting for you.” Cyclonus moved his attention to the chain around his neck.

With what seemed like little effort he gripped a length of the thing and yanked.

It came apart with a loud **CRACK** .

If he could, Ratchet would have run his fingers along the length of his neck, reveling in the feeling of the likely chipped plating there. But Ratchet had no real desire to move his hands, or arms at the moment, especially with Deadlock's grip still digging into the components there.

"Don't touch him!"

Deadlock's cry went ignored. Instead, Cyclonus bent down and sandwiched between the two Decepticon's Ratchet had nowhere to go as he slid his arms under him and pulled up. Deadlock's claws dug further in, ripping a pained grunt from the medic as the other Decepticon pulled him upward.

Ratchet let out a wince this time, allowing the moment of weakness.

Deadlock let go.

Cyclonus swung him over his shoulder once free to do so, causing a swing of nausea to rise in Ratchet's tanks. Uncomfortable as it was, Ratchet could be thankful for the small mercy of having his arms free from his torturer's grip.

Deadlock did little but gape absently as Cyclonus hauled him out of the room and into the hallway. Ratchet got the distinct feeling being passed from Decepticon to Decepticon was becoming a habit; not one he'd willingly like to continue yet one all the same.

"Apologies. Please don't take this out on me next time in the med-bay."

Ratchet looked up at him quizzically. From his place curled in the Decepticon's arms he could do little more than that, but still, he tried.

"Would you prefer to walk?"

"Oh no I feel perfectly fine cradled in a stranger's arms-- Yes I want to be let down you fragger!"

Cyclonus's response was immediate, lowering the medic instantly. Though gentle with his movement and cautious with Ratchet's exposed arms the motion was still clumsy, as if concerned about the medic's scolding.

"Now, Ya care to explain why I got a Decepticon out here looking for my aft to hand back to Megatron? I ain't going to be some bargaining chip."

Cyclonus took a step for every two of Ratchet's as they proceeded down the hall.

Cyclonus hummed, "I have a lot to explain; to a lot of you. But it's easier to take a prisoner under Megatron's order than a traitor's. I assure you Getting you back to Optimus Is my main goal."

Ratchet eyed him cautiously.

"I told you, I have a lot to explain. We can start when we find the Prime. I don't care for repeating myself."

They stared at him.

It was unnerving.

Alright maybe terrifying.

He didn't recognize most of them save for Strika, Starscream and Megatron himself. Past that?

Just a table surrounded by absolutely terrifying, large, and quite judgemental Decepticons.

This was not the “*I will not be the only one you will need to impress*” he was expecting. Maybe he didn't know exactly what he was expecting but this was odd enough to not classify.

If only he could figure out a reason for Megatron to put him in front of his war council.

“-- And Starscream will take his squad over the Northern line clearing the pathways--”

Was anyone even listening to the Warlord? They all seemed to be more invested in Optimus' current attendance on what was likely a meeting deciding the next tide of war. It wasn't as if he was paying attention much either, optics dancing between those at the table and his own datapad sitting in his lap.

He was halfway through his second paragraph when Megatron finished, offering an open table. The briefing was done and now came the debates.

“With all due respect my lord, Why is there some Autobot here?” Strika hummed, more inquisitive than harsh but the undertone was still there.

“The Prime's our Lord's new pet,” Starscream nudged the mech beside him who cringed, “I think Megatron's finally losing it.,

Several Decepticons let out a harsh snarl in response, baring their teeth at the seeker who simply waved them off.

Megatron's pede tapped Optimus' leg under the table granting him the smaller mech's attention. The Warlord tilted his helmet towards the arguing mechs in front of him.

No time like the present.

Back with the Autobots Optimus had never had much experience leading in a council style assembly. A team's Prime was followed without question, and even when it wasn't, or more accurately on earth, he had always been the one to host meetings and make the final decisions. Ultra Magnus' decisions were not to be questioned. Sentinel belittled him for every little detail. This wasn't his team.

Even during his time with the Decepticons, he'd never been asked to do anything like *this* before.

Needless to say, his confidence slipped.

“I ah, the seekers should- uh...”

“Awe look at the little thing stutter!” Someone across from him teased, “ah-ah-ah!”

Optimus shrunk in on himself somewhat. He felt stupid, assuming he could do this. And to what end? To get himself to Iacon and have Megatron kill him? Why did it always come back to that?

He stayed silent, his jaw stiffening.

Megatron nudged him again, this time a little more harshly.

“Who would even approve of such a weak thing’s branding?”

Megatron's attention snapped to the mech who spoke, turning over his engine loud enough for the table to hear. Optimus wanted to hide his face in his hands but caught the urge. The last thing he wanted was *Megatron* sticking up for him; they really were going to think he was some sort of pet.

Then, Strika squinted at him as if she noticed something.

“It’s you!” She shrieked, standing so suddenly the table sliding forward and almost throwing several objects from it, including the old strategy map.

Optimus scooted his chair back.

“You’re the mech that almost took down Megatron,” She hissed and once again all optics were on him.

“He looks a lot different half grey and without his little jetpack huh?” Starscream goaded.

The mechs around them fell back into a round of yelling and arguing.

“You didn’t tell them?!” Optimus joined in this time, comforted by the fact his own voice was mainly getting drowned out, “How do they not know?”

Megatron bristled, barely containing his own aggravation at the situation, “Sometimes I feel like I’m surrounded by idiots.”

Someone launched themselves across the table.

Allert, he would muse when he had the time, was precisely something Optimus *wasn’t* in that moment. Or to be more descriptive, his processor wasn’t bogged down with them. No insistent pings to recharge or refuel; the few he did have were ignorable at least. His processor then was more clear than it had been in months.

It didn’t spell well for the charging ‘con.

The mech, spikey and menacing looking in a way only the fanatics were had dove across the table. Why Optimus didn’t have the care to figure out. Perhaps a grasp at Megatron’s attention; some show of strength. Still, Optimus was ready.

The mech slid, arms outstretched and helm first over the battle plans splayed along the table. So Optimus dropped, lining his back with the table and waited as the other mech’s weight began to tilt over him. Hooking one arm under the mech's shoulders and the other between his crotch plating, he flipped the other mech onto the ground. Battle protocols primed themselves in a way Optimus hadn’t felt in what he could guess was years made his reflexes much sharper and as the mech swung his legs out on the floor towards Optimus’ chest he simply went up into his hands.

Flipping over the mech’s body in a roundoff-eske motion brought him in line with the mech’s helm, providing the perfect vantage to line his ax with the mech’s throat.

The held still there, the mech flat on his back and Optimus’ at his throat as the war assembly in front of them. Several mechs reached for the weapons and the others, Optimus would argue the

smarter bunch, turned to Megatron and watched. He would guess they were just as trigger-happy under the right command but knew better to lash out against the Warlord's new 'pet' as Starscream had so eloquently put it.

Violence was something he was familiar with.

"Any more objections?" Megatron hummed to his subordinates.

No one spoke up.

It took his own battle protocols a few clicks to loosen themselves into a place that allowed him to release the Decepticon under him. The mech stood and trudged himself back to his own seat, and Optimus did similarly.

He steadied himself, and this time brought himself to speak. Approaching the table he spoke.

"I think, if we're really looking to overwhelm the Autobot forces we should adopt a sort of ambush approach, taking Vos and Nyon first, encircling Rodion and taking it last. Vos of course gives us an advantage from the air too and we'll have plenty of space to dock and do repairs on some of the warships."

Megatron frowned, "This was already the plan to begin with Optimus If you're just going to rehash the same--"

In a bold move, he was sure no other Decepticon would manage Optimus raised a servo and cut the other mech off, "What I'm proposing here, is a change in the roster. And a slightly different angle. The Autobots can't use Vos. At most they have two fliers, if we allow Starscream to head the assault with most of the seekers, their force will be too much for the line there to take. Not to mention the Autobots are using Vos as an Intelligence hub, if we take that first we can scramble their major information line. It's likely Nyon won't know Vos has fallen by the time you attack."

Several mechs glared at him from across the table. Megatron's glare beside him was especially harsh, boring down and into him accusingly.

"You wish to send Starscream out there? The only command figure?" Strikia interjected.

"Yes," Optimus took a breath, "Along with the majority of the seekers. It is in everyone's best interest I assure you."

"Pardon their skepticism," Starscream leaned over the table, dragging a claw over Vos in the map before him, "None of them ever have any faith in my tactical skills."

"Faith in Your skills?! You Know that's why you've never been given your own command!" Someone amongst the table jabbed.

They continued to argue over the table. Soon enough several other mechs joined into the argument, yelling loud enough for Optimus to bring his attention to Megatron without blatantly alerting those around them.

"I know it is a lot to ask, but I need you to trust me."

"And you expect me to do so? Even if you hadn't just launched a personal attack on my life days ago but you're asking me to give Starscream of all mechs free reign with a third of my army and no supervision."

Megatron did have a point, Optimus would admit that. But so did Optimus and it was time Megatron recognized that.

Optimus leaned in, lowering his voice as he spoke into the Warlord's side, "I know Skywarp and Thundercracker wasn't the only secret you're keeping from him Megatron. I can guarantee all I'm doing is isolating a threat. He risks just as much for me as he does for you."

Megatron returned his gaze to the table, looking over what would likely be a lot of re-organizing to mediate Optimus' request. Not to mention the politics of it. Optimus watched as the mech's processor worked over what he had before him.

The suggestion was a risk he knew, but a necessary one. Isolating Starscream in Vos was the least destructive way of dealing with him. And despite Optimus' aversion to the seeker after that time he got Optimus killed, he didn't exactly like the unnecessary loss of life. That, and splitting the Autobot's attention to a two-front war was the exact kind of distraction he needed to get to Iacon.

And, he supposed, it had the added benefit of getting the fastest aspect of Megatron's forces to a place that could aid Prowl and the others. But he supposed Megatron had figured that part out already.

"I'll send Blurr with them," *another fast mech, and one who will do whatever I ask of him*, "and I will go with you, wherever you're stationed."

The yelling around them continued.

"Or would you rather I tell Starscream right here and now exactly what you and Shockwave have been keeping from him these last million years?"

Megatron's passive gaze turned hard, "Anny seeker more loyal to me stays,"

"Which is none of the old guards, none of the Seekers originally from Vos,"

"It will have to do."

Megatron looked up and across the table in front of him. He kept the hardened stare as the mechs around him calmed their yelling, or in Starscream's case; shrieking. Some sort of unspoken command got the rest of them calmed and settled and Megatron's hand came down once again over the Cybertronian Map before them. For a moment all he did was vent.

"Shut up and Sit down the lot of you. Here's the plan."

The Autobot line came out of nowhere.

They kept a steady 150 miles per hour as the Jets circled above them. Jazz, Prowl, and Bulkhead flung dust from the unused roads as they advanced. Above them, Blitzwing carried Bumblebee in form with Brainstorm holding Minimus and the Magnus hammer. No one spoke.

Their path was direct, unobstructed. The highways here hadn't been used in years save for the advancement of the Decepticon troops. They approached the fighting fast and didn't stop.

Prowl used the description 'fighting' loosely. From a distance, they could already see what seemed more like extermination occurring on the defensive line. The Autobots had been swarmed.

Above them, Blitzwing lowered his cannons. Brainstorm charged whatever weapon he carried. The rest of them prepared to hit the gas. They'd be in the thick of it within minutes. Prowl steadied his nerves.

Beside him, Jazz picked up his pace, pulling ahead of them.

They approached too quickly for the Decepticons at the back of the line to truly notice them. It made for easy passing at first. None of them whipped around quickly enough to truly get a good hit in. Though blasts grazed them several times, Prowl refused to allow them to slow.

Soon enough they were advancing on no man's land.

It drew more fire behind them but the ground team didn't slow. Confident in their companions ability they pushed forward. It was only clicks before Blitzwing and Brainstorm landed in front of them. They drove past them easily.

Prowl didn't watch. More focused on breaking the Autobot line ahead of them along with avoiding the scattered Con's but that didn't mean he missed the light show. Behind them, reflected off the armor and metal of the roads below them, flashed of red, blue and streaks of white painted their vision.

:: Did anyone know Minimus could operate the hammer without electricity already present?!::
Brainstorm's voice sounded way too excited for a mech facing an electrical storm. Still, the idea interested Prowl.

Hadn't Magnus and Optimus been the only mech's able to even lift the thing?

A joined, *:: No::* rang over the coms with a dispassion only capable of those so purely done with a situation that the prospect of a spontaneous thunderstorm sounded more like a chore than a miracle.

It seemed to clear their backs for the most part though, and most of the fire they took faded away to nothing. Soon enough the seekers were back up into the air and above them, making their way to the swarmed side of the Autobot line. It looked like they were going to make it; perhaps by a set of beneficial accidents but Prowl was starting to learn not to question a good thing.

Meters now. The treads of Prowl's tires were wearing with the forced speed, far beyond his usual RPM from their continued acceleration. Self repair would take care of it in time, getting them to safety was more important in this moment.

They passed what Prowl could identify with certainty was their first Autobot. They were going to do this. Once again, Blitzwing and Brainstorm landed in front of them; Bumblebee and Minimus perched on their shoulders respectively. The Magnus Hammer cackled like a hollow laugh with unused charge as they stared down the barricade before them.

And then Jazz Stopped.

The ground below them rumbled.

His tires screamed against the road underneath him before he had the thought to transform back into root form. Narrowly dodging the car breaking so suddenly before him Prowl followed suit. Bulkhead passed them, his mass preventing the abrupt stop that the smaller mechs could achieve.

Jazz turned to him. His expression spoke more volume than words ever could. Worried, Prowl's attention immediately went to the seekers before them.

The Autobot side erupted.

With what was hard to describe. A wave of backup forces here, a warship there, artillery fire from somewhere deeper in the fray. Their aim-- the weakened Decepticon line and anything that fell in between. Bumblebee dove from his companion's shoulders and behind his pede. Minimus and the two seekers with him made an attempt to defend themselves from the barrage. Prowl and Jazz seemed to be outside the target zone if only just. With a sickening vertigo Prowl understood.

Prowl couldn't move. As if Cybertron itself welded his pedes to the ground and forced him to painstakingly watch the slaughter before him. Jazz ran to his side and wrapped his arms around the other ninja bot. Prowl, though aware of the movement didn't truly feel it.

Smoke.

It rose around them, hot around the barrels of blasters and tight in their vents. It drenched the battlefield as if a rolling fog came off a nearby lake. Distantly in his processor Prowl registered that in all likelihood it was some sort of Autobot tactic, hiding the encroaching force from the barricade on the other side. More closely peering in his awareness was the loss of sight of his companions.

Yet still, he couldn't move.

"I'm sorry," *Jazz.*

"I didn't have a choice, they shot Cliffjumper. And I couldn't... not you. And Optimus he- he's not coming." Whispered, delicately into his neck cabling, "I didn't have a choice."

You're scared. We all are.

Prowl didn't acknowledge the mech around him, his optics focused on the approaching figure.

Blue, heavily built. With orangish accents. The approaching mech's battle mask was down though it did very little to hide the mech's identity. Energon sword in one hand and shield in the other, the mech came close enough for Prowl to taste his field; triumphant and wild.

Sentinel Prime.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you, everyone, for all of the support on this!! It means so much to me!!

Next Time;

Isolating the Threat.

The Battle for Vos

The Fall of Vos

Chapter Summary

With Jazz's betrayal and nowhere to run, Team Prime has to fight. But even from the other side of the Decepticon front, Optimus manages to send help, even while someone is sending help for him.

Chapter Notes

I go back to school on Monday, so Updating is going back to its usual pace. In the meantime, enjoy another chapter.

If you're looking for a good song for this chapter, check out "Fire on Fire" by Sam Smith. (Also check out *Watership Down* on Netflix, it totally distracted me from getting this done earlier)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Bumblebee's stingers only provided so much visibility through the smoke of the battlefield. It's blue light at least illuminated part way up Blitzwing's chassis behind him; and that was enough for the small mech to find comfort in. Larger bolts flashed somewhere to his right, no doubt Minimus' doing.

It was loud. Too loud.

Bumblebee had to dim his auditory receptors against the blasts from the Autobot side. His battle mask helped marginally against what vibrations but did little for his visibility.

Behind him, Blitzwing took most of the fire directed at them. Shots of red occasionally wrapped around them and it wasn't long before their bond pulsed with something akin to '*fuck this*'. It wasn't a surprise when Blitzwing swung around and grabbed for Bumblebee, lifting him to a place he could balance on the larger mech's shoulder.

Their take-off was immediate; Blitzwing's thrusters engaged and they were off the ground in seconds. The smoke flushed from around them at the sudden air pressure change and Bumblebee found himself looking at several Autobots that would have been surrounding them.

Bang!

Click whir, "Eeehhh!"

Some sort of fire and then Blitzwing screamed. It took Bumblebee a moment to realize they were no longer rising and a short glance to find out why.

"Is that a *harpoon*?! Who the FRAG HARPOONS ANOTHER MECH?!"

The protruding object found itself impaled at an angle in Blitzwing's left shin track, preventing him

from moving any further.

Random laughed in Bumblebee's audial, "I feel like zat whale from zat organic book!"

Bumblebee made quick work sliding himself down Blitzwing's back and lodging his pedes uncomfortably into some crease into Blitzwing's armor. Engaging both stingers he-

Bang!

Another pained cry from Blitzwing.

-he tried to ignore the fear over their bond. Engaging both stingers he put down his visor and started melting through the harpoon end attached to some sort of chain. It cut cleanly, but that didn't comfort Bumblebee.

Not with another one, this time lodged into Blitzwing's wing was starting to wind, bringing them closer to the ground. There was no time to-

Bang!

A scream.

-no time to think apparently. This time the thing landed in Blitzwing's opposite thigh, too close to Bumblebee for comfort.

Click-whir, "To my front!"

Bumblebee moved as directed, dragging himself up to his partner's chest. The larger mech wrapped himself around his smaller companion.

Click-whir, "Time to make a big splash!"

Blitzwing disengaged his thrusters, flipped himself mid-air and restarted them, and thrust himself directly towards the Autobots bellow.

Bumblebee held his vents.

Something off to Prowl left just about exploded into the ground, sending metal and debris across the field.

"Come," Sentinel Prime commanded and Jazz complied. There was no hesitation in his movements; no *fight*. Jazz had made his decision, however misguided Prowl thought it may be, Jazz was on their side.

When had he started thinking the Autobots were *them* and not *us*?

"I've made this mistake already Jazz," Prowl didn't let his voice beg, he knew it wouldn't help, "I already betrayed Optimus once and look where we are now. If I hadn't turned him in he could have snuck here peacefully. He could have worked something out with Shockwave."

"Optimus?" Sentinel retracted his mask and *laughed*, "That space-bridge wash out couldn't lead an organic to Hydrogen Dioxide if it lived in the stuff! You want to trust him over your own faction? You filthy 'Con lover."

“Jazz you can't really be-”

Sentinel slithered his shield barring arm around Jazz, pulling him to his side. Jazz looked down. Sentinel Prime grinned.

“Jazz is a good Autobot, Prowl. A good Autobot who sees exactly why this Decepticon extermination needs to happen hmm?”

Jazz nodded his voice came out stale like week old energon, “When Optimus Prime and Megatron are both defeated the four million year war will be over. Sentinel Prime will be the mech to that.”

Prowl spark chamber clenched down on its contents.

Oh, Jazz... no.

Sentinel Prime leaned down and laid a soft kiss down onto Jazz's helm before re-engaging his battle mask.

What has he been telling you? Doing to you?

“See? Jazz *understands*. And good Autobot's get rewarded don't they Jazz Major?”

The mech's visor lit up at that, looking up at Prowl in what he could only decipher as hope; a bare, desperate perversion of it. It only caused more concern in Prowl tanks.

Something to their flank caught Sentinel's attention and Prowl couldn't help himself but to look as well.

The fog was dissipating, revealing more of the fighting beside them. Minimus was pinned, the Hammer being torn from his grasp. Brainstorm and Blitzwing both overwhelmed and in rough shape, chained to the ground with what looked like painful spires. Bumblebee, doing what he could to free the rest of them. Bulkhead was nowhere to be found.

“*Run !*” Blitzwing screamed at the little mech trying desperately to melt through the chains.

Bumblebee responded with a Desperate cry of his own, “*Not alone! Not alone!*”

Prowl snapped his attention back to Sentinel, bringing his ninja starts up and to his chest before positioning himself to take off towards Sentinel.

“Jazz, restrain him before I change my mind about you keeping a *pet*, ”

When he launched, the mech that met him wasn't the Prime.

Arm guard locked onto Jazz's nunchucks their faces almost touched. Visor stared into visor, weapon lodged against weapon. They shook slightly against each other, pushing desperately for the upper hand.

“Optimus isn't coming Prowl! Accept it! It was a mistake leading the Decepticons here!” Jazz pulled back putting Prowl off balance for a click but no longer.

Prowl counters, weaving himself into a turn and throwing a single start, grazing Jazz's Chevron. It gave him barely enough time to put himself into a defensive position to take the full brunt of a kick straight to his chassis, barely guarded by his arms.

“Jazz! Listen to me! I've been here before! Not feeling like you have a choice and so you just pick

what you've been told is right! Well, it's time to think for yourself!"

"Can't you see you're loosing! At least this way Sentinel says you can live! *We can live !*"

The solvent in Prowl's mouth turned sour. *Sentinel Prime.*

"And you'd choose a mech who threatens you over one who's already laid down his life for you?"

Because they knew how much Tarn scared Optimus. Because both Jazz and he knew exactly what facing Megatron had meant to Optimus-- what he was sacrificing to get them to safety.

Blitzwing had done the same. Brainstorm, Minimus and him had all escaped from Trypticon of all places. Bumblebee and Bulkhead had sacrificed their faction and homeworld for this! Cliffjumper lost his life! Jazz couldn't see what they had given to get here, or did and didn't care.

Anger Rose in Prowl's spark.

Jazz pulled out his stasis cuffs.

And what was worse-- what was wrong at this moment, betrayal aside was the fact Prowl wasn't sure he could *win* .

Jazz had years of training on him-- and centuries of service in the elite guard. What did Prowl have against that? Half of his cyber-ninja training and centuries among Spacebridge technicians. The matchup was nowhere near any semblance of fairness.

Jazz was swift in his approach; light on his feet but strong in his movements.

"Just--"

On earth, for the short time he had spent there, Prowl had often praised nature's hierarchy. It wasn't always kind, especially to those on the bottom, but it made sense. The strong preyed on the weak; but only when necessary to survival. Prowl could spend hours pondering the significance of that-- how circular it was, How balanced.

Most situations seemed perversions of it. The war, in a way, often reminded Prowl of two cobras, striking each other on the tips of each other's tails, slowly Killing each other in the end with no real winner. It was morbid but with populations dwindling, it made sense. Pit, the Autobot's only used half their planet for actual residents anymore-- the rest converted to farmland. Colonies were the same.

In this situation, Prowl felt like a dog. Or in more specific terms, a pit fighting dog; matched up against one twice his caliber. If this was Prowl's first fight, this was Jazz's hundredth. A newly trained and scar-less thing up against one well worn but aggressive mutt.

Their ring master; one Sentinel Prime.

The situation was unnatural, orchestrated and would not have occurred if not forced into it. Now if Jazz could only *see it*.

Prowl went low. Sliding under and past Jazz's motion at the last minute was the only way he could really think to Dodge the oncoming onslaught.

Because that's what failure meant, no matter what Sentinel said. Failure meant death; slaughter. No matter what Sentinel said. If not for him than for the rest of them.

Jazz had been expecting it, and it only took a kick to Prowl's back to have him laying face first against the ground. A swift struggle was all between that and the Stasis cuffs and then a gentle weight over him.

“It’s okay Prowler. It’s alright. It's over.” Jazz hummed softly.

A glimpse. A glimpse was all he got of them lined up, all 6 of them. Their backs ramrod straight and held by two guards each. Four, for the largest of them. Sentinel stood in front of them, checking his blaster in a haze of smoke. A glimpse wasn't enough to see their order.

His spark thrummed against its casing. It spun too fast. And then, a gentle hand twisted his neck over and away.

“You won’t want to watch this Prowler,” Jazz murmured. He said it like it was a mercy. As if being the single survivor was some sort blessing and Jazz was a savior for saving him the Carnage.

And then-- and then--

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The Helm. The spark. The T-cog. Execution style.

If Prowl ever got the chance he'd kill both of them. Sentinel and Jazz. It didn't even feel like a decision fuelled by anger at that moment. Fear and grief too prevalent to allow for the burning of rage to even grace his spark. Anger would have been easier. Easier than fear and the static of the Stasis cuffs keeping him down and pliant.

Somewhere, Bumblebee screamed. Its sound had always been distinct, shrill and annoying. And then, a soft shushing. Calming. *Blitzwing*.

Movement. And then-

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The Helm. The spark. The T-cog.

“...Executed for crimes against Cybertron.” He couldn't make out what Sentinel was saying. Not fully at least. Just bits and pieces.

It was happening too fast now. Prowl didn't know exactly whom to call out for. He hadn't seen the order, hadn't seen the lineup... he wanted to yell, cry out for something. But didn't have the words. Fear and grief kept them down, huddled and cowering in his spark.

He closed his optics.

“Not him! No no *no no nonono!*” Bumblebee.

And then-

Bang!---

A soft groan and-

Huffing. Laboured, heavy huffing. Just barely audible over the gunfire behind them.

“Sentinel Prime sir!”, Huffing, “I must apologize for the intrusion but--”, his vents were so loud it

cutting him off, “High command sent me to give you a message. You're needed immediately back in Rodion. Ultra Magnus has been trying to get a hold of you for clicks!”

And then nothing but the sounds of fighting at the Decepticon line.

Prowl was never so happy to hear a verbal glitch in his life. How or why Blurr was here didn't matter as long as it stopped the massacre. Asking those questions, the who, why, how or where could wait until they were somewhere safe.

The words came easy.

“They know Blurr! IT WAS JAZZ!”

The mass above him stiffened.

Bang!

Pede steps, vents and then--

“Now really Sentinel Prime is that really a way to treat another member of the elite guard?” Blurr sounded so confident there must be some sort of plan--

Plan. Optimus.

Prowl didn't let himself get hopeful. They were already two down and it wouldn't prove wise to be reckless now. But Blurr was on their side, wasn't he? This was at least a chance to get the rest of them out.

And go where? Part of his mind asked him, *both sides want you all dead.*

Later. We'll deal with it later.

With his head turned there was little he could see, but there was much he could do. It was now or never he reminded himself, now or chances are everyone was done for.

There was no way in this situation he could calm himself. But somehow, if he could control the emotion rather than suppress it; the urgency, the fear, *the anger* ; then maybe he had a chance. It being ‘worth a shot’ wasn't enough anymore, it was now or not at all. Prowl took a deep vent and focused.

He let no more than a small hum escape. Control. Processor over matter was all about control. He couldn't let Jazz realize what he was doing.

“Blitzzy! Blitzzy are you okay--”

“Arrest him!”

“Oh please, if anyone could catch me--”

“I am so sorry--”

He was needed. They needed him.

Pop!

The cuffs came off with a satisfactory *pop-click* . Prowl wasn't about to lose his chance.

Prowl twisted his hips and let them lead him against Jazz's one on his spinal strut. It was enough torque to roll out from the other mech and get back onto his own two feet in a fluid motion. It left Jazz prone, but not completely out of the equation.

“Blurr! Get Jazz!” Prowl barked as an order but did not turn in that direction.

He didn't want to see the carnage yet. He called himself several kinds of a coward for it.

Blurr was over to them in one moment, grabbing for the discarded stasis cuffs and on Jazz the next. They wouldn't hold Jazz, processor over matter was a trick they both knew, but it would slow him. More importantly, Blurr and Jazz were a much more even match up for Jazz.

Two experienced pit bulls. A fair dogfight.

He would have to turn now, back to Sentinel and the others. He'd have to free them, but to do that he'd have to finally see exactly who had been shot.

Control but do not suppress your emotions. There will be time to grieve later.

Approaching footsteps made the decision for him. To not turn would be a death sentence.

Prowl turned and Immediately took a step backward, narrowly escaping a slash of Sentinel's sword. There was no time to think, but piston memory served him well, getting him out of danger without real consciousness to it.

“I’m so sick of your mechs! Acting like you have some sort of fucking purpose! You and your Goad damned vocalizer glitches!” Sentinel all but roared at him as he wound out for another swing.

“Good thing!” there was a grunt, likely a hit from Jazz, “Good thing then, we're just the distraction!”

Distraction?

What happened next could only be described as well timed and strategically placed chaos. It started as a faint flash of purple out in the fog as Sentinel swung again. Then, slightly closer and it is brief tenure closer to them he made out the distinct silhouette of claws, sharp and large raised over seeker wings; then it was gone again as if blinked into non-existence.

Then, came the noise.

He heard it approaching. Even Sentinel's, “What the frag-” and how it screamed against the air resistance.

Up until now, Prowl understood the idea of sound traveling slower than light. Be he had never seen it before. For nanoseconds, he saw the fog lift in front of him. No, not lift. Vibrate and condense down onto their armor, leaving a blanket of liquid on his plating. And then, it went quiet.

A medic later would explain to him that he had been extremely close to Thundercracker's flight path; their fight had almost been directly under it. The sheer noise of his sonic boom had popped the delicate lining of his audials deeper in his helm. It wasn't a hard fix, but devastating on the battlefield. Decepticons stationed with the outlier had their audials modified for it. There would likely be ringing in his audial receptors for a few weeks but at least he could hear again.

But for now, when Sentinel barked something and he heard absolutely nothing, all Prowl

understood was that he had gone deaf.

No gunfire, no yelling, absolutely nothing.

Sentinel seemed just as disoriented, lip plates moving wildly as he looked around frantically. Prowl took the moment to step back a few paces, putting distance between them.

Without the fog, it was easier to see the calamity around them. Especially the execution line.

Brainstorm seemed to be up, taking the Autobot's confusion and recent hearing loss to his advantage. At his feet Blitzwing laid on his back, hand tightly grasping his left side. Bumblebee's bright yellow plating sat Stark on his legs, a medical kit sat beside them both.

A little further, two greying frames.

Prowl turned his attention to the skies.

Seekers.

Hundreds in formation simply bombing the shit out of the enemy line.

Never had he seen so many in one place before.

He attempted to turn, looking to Blurr for some sort of confirmation but he got nothing in turn. He couldn't even hear his own voice let alone someone else's. Both the speedster's and Jazz's optics were on the sky.

Only one of them showed any hint of fear, and it wasn't Blurr.

There was a stagger to everyone's gait. But at least they were still on their feet. And a warrior on their feet was still dangerous. It took too long for Prowl to remember that fact.

It earned him a searing pain to the back, not deep but definitely long, ripping into both of his thrusters. It took no time to turn around and have his optics once again locked with Sentinel's. A smarter mech would have rammed it through his spark.

Prowl worked in intelligence though, and in turn, had seen Sentinel's combat SIM scores.

Mediocre at best.

Sentinel Prime was an opportunist. Perhaps manipulative as well with the way he had Jazz sat under his thumb; but mostly an opportunist. It was the only real reason he had climbed rank and escaped punishment up until now and it leads to one of his greatest faults-- his short-sightedness.

Only a true idiot would see an army of seekers and still try and get one over on an old rival. And not even directly, just going after his team like some sort of vulture.

Ah. That's what Sentinel was. A vulture; an opportunist omnivore with a reputation for being butt ugly.

They were engaged when that sudden purple light arrived once more and the familiarity of it finally got home.

Skywarp ripped Sentinel away from him and said something Prowl couldn't make out, and then turned to him and said something else, grinning from audial to audial.

Prowl simply shook his head and pointed to the side of his helm.

Skywarp rolled his optics, grabbed him and then the purple light was back. This time it was all-encompassing but brief and soon enough he found himself in a medical bay, and Skywarp was gone.

It was so jarring, going from the battlefield to a bustling medical bay than Prowl just about fell over himself and into another mech. The medic's frame and red paint screaming speedster but the armband with the medic symbol told him otherwise. Said mech started speaking to him quickly, motioning to him several times over.

He should have been fighting through the bay of obvious Decepticons and almost lifted a fist to the mechs before him until another hand came down on his shoulder.

Prowl looked up at the other mech to his side. Brainstorm's battle mask gave away no particular emotion, but the calm nod he gave did.

It's okay. This is okay.

He'd just have to trust him for now.

He let himself be ushered to a medical berth; shock keeping him pliant. It didn't however, keep him from looking around.

The headcount revealed a staggering Brainstorm, clambering onto a berth across the room. He spoke briefly for a moment with a medic. Close to him, Blurr sat mostly uninjured. He was, however, looking around on high alert while taking the occasional break to tap something into a datapad. Every time someone came to talk to him he'd shrink down into himself and hold up the datapad to them.

Bumblebee was screaming. Or something. Closer to the other side of the bay than he was to Prowl, he was elbowing any Decepticon he could and attempting to rise out of his berth. They ended up sedating him.

Blitzwing wasn't anywhere to be seen.

Bulkhead and Minimus weren't either.

Prowl laid his helm back, optic fluid welling up. He wouldn't let it fall, he had to be strong here. If not for himself than for the rest of them, he *had to* -

A clawed digit came down on his arm and Prowl jerked, surprised by the medic's soft touch. Their optics met and the medic spoke again. And then, patted his arm softly.

It's okay, no one's going to judge you here .

The fluid pooled and fell.

The medic gently rolled him onto his front and started on the damage on his back. It was a small mercy; the chance to hide his face from those around him but he appreciated it none the less. The pain was a good distraction from the emotions pooling in his spark as well. His clawed digits did wonders on letting him focus on the physical rather than the emotional; to the point, he started to wonder if it was intentional. A sympathetic medic; what a concept.

It was hard to focus. A million concepts and questions begged and pulled at his processor but none

stuck. Their safety, why Skywarp had come after them in the first place, where their dead were-- the concepts pestered him distantly. Barely they whispered through the door to his processor but never really breaking through. Instead, a swell of emotions screaming at him for attention and acknowledgement.

Guess which ones won out?

It was a purple flash on the wall in front of him that dragged him once more from his meditation-like state. In Prowl's mind the headcount, for those alive at least, was complete. It must be an injured seeker he rationalized. Still, it was another distraction and something to keep him occupied.

So he lifted his arm and looked.

Jazz had fallen on to his aft, looking around him with a panicked glint to his visor.

Prowl saw crimson.

The same medic that had done his repairs, a mech by the name of knockout, would tell him what happened next when he woke from Stasis. The selective recording he would explain. His processor simply recorder the emotion and not tell events-- a type of amnesia associated with high amounts of stress. Prowl leaped from the medical slab and was on Jazz before any of the medical could restrain him.

He got exactly three good punched into the side of Jazz's helm before Knockout got him off the major. He was frantic, yelling things no one could really understand, other than something about Optimus going to kill him if he didn't get to Jazz first.

They had to sedate him as well in the end.

Formally, Optimus had been labeled a foreign entity and an ally to the Decepticon forces. He didn't know exactly when Megatron had changed his station but it's what the paperwork said and Optimus wasn't complaining.

Well, he wasn't complaining *out loud* . The title set him securely in contact with high command but without a formal shift schedule. Which meant at any point in time, on the whim of a general or lieutenant, he would heft himself up from the small quarters given to him and run off to their beck and call.

Not that he was sleeping much anyways, he hadn't since the medically induced stasis but having a moment to at least come up with a plan for Iacon would have been nice.

Right after sending Blurr off to Vos Shockwave had called him down to have a *chat* . Optimus had stormed out when the scientist had asked to see the scars on the inside of his spark chamber.

And then Strika had dropped half of the paperwork for Vos' siege into his lap and told him if it was his plan, he could deal with it.

He was then stopped by Lugnut in the hall accusing him of manipulating Lord Megatron or something. Optimus hadn't really been listening. And then, and only then had Optimus made it back to his habsuite, laid down and-

Knock knock.

Optimus let out a soft groan and stood back up. His pedes felt like lead as he dragged himself back

to the door and opened it.

“Optimus,” Megatron stood stiffly, arms folded behind his back.

Optimus could already feel a headache coming on already, “Is it Starscream's war declaration or Blurr’s report? And do I need to come back to the command deck?”

“I think it would be best to have *that* conversation on our way down the medical bay. Come.”

Optimus followed the warlord as he turned back down the corridor. It took a few extra jogging paces to bring himself into step with Megatron and they continued their brisk pace of their decent.

“I suppose we should start with what you’re more concerned about. We have word from Kaon’s city center; your team has arrived.”

Two mechs moved around them in the hallway, bowing as they passed.

“In what condition?”

Megatron's field flared out in a complex mix of hesitance and worry; as is Optimus would lash out against him physically for whatever the outcome was. Still, his professional posture held as they continued their stride.

Given past encounters, Optimus didn't blame him.

“That bad?” Optimus flared his own field out in a reassuring but flat emotion. Whatever it was he'd have to deal with it, and at this point, he had no plans on making this loop permanent. Best to know what happened and record it than not know at all.

Besides, he's mourned them all before.

“Blurr submitted a report not too long ago, Shockwave handled it personally.”

Well, that was a stupid idea.

“What? Does Blurr report to shockwave now?” Optimus hummed out, half amusing the idea and keeping half a mind to have the command switched later.

“I can’t have you lot sending secret information now can I?” Megatron turned another corner, lengthening his stride around the bend.

When Optimus struggled to keep the pace he slowed so that they may keep side by side as they conversed. Optimus chose to not think too much of it.

“Shockwave and Blurr have... history. A history Blurr now knows involves his incineration and or use as a paperweight or living communication array. My suggestion, if you want our reports monitored, filter them through Spec Ops.”

Megatron huffed, a restrained irritation flicking into his field, “I will keep that in mind. Now, may I continue with his report or shall I let you simply reorganize my entire chain of command?”

Though the prospect was tempting all Optimus let out was a small, non-committal noise. There was a semblance of an agreement to it as if Optimus may have already done it in his head (he had) but chose not to voice it.

“I thought it best to deliver this news personally, as it is such a sensitive matter,” again that

hesitance pooled into his field, his claws flexing unconsciously, “He writes that he, and the mechs called Prowl, Bumblebee and Jazz made it out unscathed save for minor repairs and audial damage. Blitzwing has been in surgery for several hours now, his T-cog had been completely blown out. There's more to it but I suppose I'll let the little one explain to you why they had to sedate *both* of them.”

“I'm sure once I actually get my hands on that report I'll know.”

Megatron fell silent for a beat too long. Hesitated a click too many. There was something hidden just beneath the surface that Optimus could almost run his digits over. Whatever it was, Megatron thought it consequential; whether it was or not was still to be seen.

“Minimus and Bulkhead didn't make it. They were executed by a mech I'm unfamiliar with. I thought... perhaps you would want to hear it as soon as possible.”

Optimus paused in the hall, Megatron stopped a pace after.

“How?”

“Their frames were not recovered. Blurr says they had them lined up in an execution line. A Prime shot them execution style there on the field. My condolences,” Megatron's tone was static, emotionless and careful as if Optimus was glass about to break.

Instead, he let the air out of his vents, and closed his eyes. Unconsciously he rubbed his comm array and took the moment to center himself.

He had lost two of them. He had acted too late, hadn't pushed to get Starscream's forces out there fast enough. Perhaps he should have sent them to the Rodion border rather than that of Vos'-- too many possibilities for change and too many variables.

He would have to ask Blurr more when he returned or at least look at that report. Faintly he could feel several errors in his log scratch at him about it but he pushed them away. He had to focus. He had to get the rest of them back.

He would have to hold rites for Bulkhead a ninth time. For Minimus, a first.

They'd have to hold theirs and Ratchet's at the same time.

“Are you alright? I understand you were close,” Megatron spoke delicately with his intent to calm completely evident.

“I am not in the mood for mind games now Megatron. I will handle it as I have before,” Optimus retorted. He snapped open his optics and turned back in the direction they were headed.

“I mean it. I understand it doesn't get easier every time, but I also understand I'm not the mech to help you through this,” Megatron continued his path down the hall.

Optimus eventually realized he was still meant to follow.

“Your team will be moved into the Nemesis when it's safe to transport them. Until then I'm afraid you'll have to make do with the second reason I dragged you all the way down here.”

Optimus raised an optical ridge at the Warlord as they came to a stop at a door. Painted delicately or perhaps stenciled in bright red were the words *private care*. Likely used for mechs with longer lasting injuries or those like Optimus; mechs in special situations, the reason to why they would be

here eluded Optimus.

And then, Megatron opened the door.

His plating stood in stark contrast to the purples not only of the room but of the medic and Cyclonus. It was concerning to see him laid out like that, with Hook so focused on mending his forearms. He was broken for sure, broken and tired and hurt but he was alive and that simple fact brought a calm to his spark.

“Ratchet,” Said as if the very vibrations of his vocalizer would shatter the illusion before him. Optimus didn’t quite believe the data from his optics for a moment but then he spoke.

“Stop staring and get over here,”

It was when he placed the stripped components of Ratchet’s servo onto his own and squeezed with the fore of the smallest organic he could picture that Ratchet actually felt *real*. He was aware the notion may be interpreted as a weakness the Decepticon’s around them but no one said a word.

For several clicks they stayed there, Optimus stood by his berth side under the watch of curious optics.

“A lot has happened, we need to talk,” Because business was easier than the alternative. But there was something else he had to cover first, “Who did this to you?”

Ratchet huffed, wincing as hook hit something sensitive on his other arm, “You’re not the only one with a story kid, Sorry mine doesn’t involve setting up the largest Decepticon schism in history.”

From behind them, Megatron huffed in the doorway, “Obviously you don’t know the phase sixers took Megazarak’s side of my mutiny, *now that* was a blow to the Decepticon cause. Starscream is nothing.”

When Ratchet let out an amused chuff as if understanding what Megatron was talking about Optimus retracted his battle mask. He didn’t realize he was smiling at first, but it felt good.

“Where is everyone else?”

Too bad he would have to ruin it.

“The rest are safe save for Bulkhead and Minimus,” Optimus swallowed hard, “They didn’t make it out of Vos.”

Ratchet’s face fell, not to one of sadness though; but to one of a hardened yet resigned soldier who had lost a friend. They shared a brief overlap of fields, comforting each other but not allowing it to go much further than that with the others around them. It would have to do for now, until all of them were together and able to work out rites for them both. Their fields snapped back.

“Sorry to ruin the mood but who exactly is Minimus?” Ratchet grumbled, obviously uncomfortable with the touchy mood and in no way sorry.

This time, it was Optimus’ turn to let out an amused chuff, if only to fake a lighter mood.

“If I may,” A voice just behind Optimus cleared their vents, “He was a prisoner in Trypticon and served under Optimus as a general.”

Optimus wheeled around to Cyclonus who stood like a scolded officer, rigidly straight and arms at

his side. His face was passive but stern. His field was tight.

It alarmed Optimus. He had known Cyclonus only for his position on Strika's personal team as a Major and little more. His boldness spoke volumes though yet his posture conflicted with the usual assumptions. It left Optimus unable to exactly pin where the mech was going with butting in like that. At least Hook had the decency to stay quiet out of respect.

"A general hmm?" Megatron sounded almost amused, "What? Are you starting a little army of your own now?"

Optimus chose to ignore him, "I never gave him the title Cyclonus. To imply any more of a chain of command than I or Prowl is completely incorrect. Is there something I can help you with?"

That seemed to take the Major aback by that. That slight widening of his optics was enough to give that away at least. Yet, his tone did not deter the mech, much to Optimus' annoyance.

"I'm sorry, my Prime. I suspect I have my times mixed up--"

It was Megatron's engines in a loud growl that cut Cyclonus off, "You forget your place Cyclonus. You will return to your post immediately."

The removal of Ratchet's hand from his own that jolted Optimus from his rising ire. That raised hand reached over to Hook's supplies and immediately grasped for a wrench. Knowing what was coming, Optimus took a step back.

"Now both of you listen here," Ratchet waved the Wrench in Megatron's direction, "Cyclonus here's got a lot to say. And ain't nobody leaving this room until we hear the full of it. Is that understood?"

Both Optimus and Megatron nodded swiftly.

"Alright Big guy, tell them what you told me on our way,"

Cyclonus seemed to become even more rigid than before (if that was even possible), "I serve under the late Optimus Prime, yet to be reassigned to his predecessor. In an attempt to prevent the oncoming war I was sent on a covert mission without the new Prime's knowledge; sent back in time to serve my Prime."

"Then you have failed," Megatron ground out, still wary of Ratchet's impromptu weapon, "The war for Cybertron has already started."

Cyclonus looked directly at Optimus, optics dimming as if apologetic, "Not this squabble. This is nothing compared to that of the war of the Primes on the horizon. "

Chapter End Notes

Your comments are always always welcome, and I'm back to answering a bit better!

thank you so much for reading.

Next Time:

With the team still recovering, Cyclonus sets about revealing to Optimus exactly what the war of the Primes is.

Starscream reveals what exactly happened to Vos and splits the Decepticon army in two, as Optimus predicted.

The Fall of Rodion

Chapter Summary

Starscream Is pissed and gets a bit of revenge.

FINALLY, I GET TO WRITE A MEGOP SCENE WHERE THEY DON'T
FUCKING HATE EACH OTHER YES

Chapter Notes

You can thank SirSoundwave, Entangledwood and Sanzaru for convincing me NOT to make this a depressing chapter and hey, it turned out well.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Starscream looked over Vos.

Or what was left of it.

In his mind's eye, he could picture the past glory of his city overlaid what he could actually see. Large golden spires almost blocked out the dingy and crumbling metal structures before him. Seekers streamed through the dingy sky and for a moment they weren't soldiers but civilian fliers darting between buildings, going on with their own business. At the top of them all, Starscream. Their ruler, protector, and Winglord.

“Excuse me, Lord Starscream,”

The vision faded. And once again he was faced with the crumbled and ruined city. At some point, it looked like the grounders had tried to develop the North point but abandoned the project partway through. It's moderately new rebar stood out against the rest of the rusting city. Somehow it seemed more offensive than the bombing scorch marks or the rusted buildings or the military encampment.

They had tried to change *his* city. They had tried to erase them- to take away what was *his*. They would pay for it. They would pay for it in Energon.

Starscream turned to the general behind him who had spoken, “Proceed.”

There was no way Megatron hadn't known of Vos' condition, not with the number of spies they had on Cybertron. There was no way Optimus hadn't known of Vos' condition, he lived here for frag's sake. They had betrayed him and they would *regret it*.

He was too mentally and physically exhausted to throw a fit. And he had a whole seeker army at his back. Good leaders didn't throw temper tantrums.

They did though, give shows of force.

“We located the Prime in charge of their Base, my Lord. We are waiting on instruction for what we should do with him,” the seeker bowed, as he should.

A boiling rage encompassed his spark.

“Bring him to me,”

The Commander dipped backward from where he came and Starscream fell back into looking over his destroyed city.

The remaining structures were barely usable for civilian quarters let alone military encampment. Save for Sentinel's surprise forces all the Autobot's had been able to set up was their intelligence base and some small barracks if the fighting went on longer. In short, not only had they handed him a destroyed city but a *useless* one as well.

Their only option would be to *raid his own city* and then *move on* .

Oh how Optimus and Megatron would *pay*.

The collective of two sets of engines came to a stall beside him, landing one at each of his sides.

“The entire north side is gone, stripped down for farmland,” Thundercracker just about spat at Starscream's feet.

“South and west are still intact but rusted to all frag. We also saw a lot of acid rain damage on the flyover,” Skywarp didn't sound anymore impressed, but it manifested itself more in annoyance than all-out Malice.

Starscream wished he could offer more to both of them in way of reassurance; that somehow this would all work out. But it would be uncertain and at most a facade meant to make them all feel better. It was false-- *wrong* and the last thing he wanted to put on his trine right now was a lie. Not after being separated for so long.

So instead, he told them the truth, “We can't stay here. And there's an army behind us and in front of us.”

The fact they would splinter from Megatron was already implied.

“We have to move on, and it won't be easy,” he finished.

Skywarp placed a service on his shoulder. It felt distant.

“My Lord,” the seeker was back, and this time the entire command trine turned to acknowledge him.

The Prime's flailing and screaming only proved to annoy Starscream more. He was small, a speedster format Starscream recognized as something completely un-primely. The seeker held his arms above his head tightly, allowing the rest of him to dangle while he thrashed. His white plating was dirty and dented, but he looked better than some of the other Autobots in their custody.

“Who's this?” Thundercracker grunted, looking expressively unimpressed.

“It calls itself Getaway Prime,” the soldier responded.

“Getaway Prime...” Starscream contemplated, “And how many others have we taken alive?”

The Prime continued to spit and kick, ignored by the four seekers around him.

“Most of the ranking officers surrendered,” the seeker reported.

“I will not stand for this!” the small mech all but shrieked.

Starscream hummed, thinking for a brief moment before coming forward and crouching in front of the mech. His motion was controlled as he took the small Prime's chin in his hands.

“No, I don't think you will.”

Starscream wasn't an interrogator. Not that he didn't have the spark for it. No, in truth, he had never been a fan of the mess. Interrogations, Assassinations, executions... they could all be just so *messy*.

And who knew when he would have his next chance to clean himself.

“Skywarp.”

His trine mate came forward, a visceral excitement radiating in the space between them.

“Start with his legs If he does not wish *to stand for this*. ”

“You're from the future of a loop,” Optimus *couldn't believe it*, “ Which one? What did I do right? What was it like? ”

Cyclonus blinked several times, surprised enough to reset his optics, and with it his immediate logic processes.

“You never mentioned a number of the loop,” Cyclonus finally got out.

“My Predecessor,” Optimus stated as if the word personally offended at him, “ *Of what?* Spacebridge repair?”

Cyclonus, a mech Optimus had limited contact, to begin with, came off as reserved and intimidating. Now, he mostly brought up questions. He knew he was part of Strika's team; highly ranked and in a position occasionally to meld with Megatron's personal team.

Cyclonus blinked at him several times as if not understanding, “No. I mean. He's the next Prime after you. Why would... why would you think he built Spacebridges?”

Megatron huffed, plating bristling up and ready to command the mech outside of the room. Still, with the threat of a wrench to the helm, he played nice, a relief to Optimus.

“What is it my concern for some sort of decent amongst the Magnus' petty Primes. They can tear each other apart for all I care,” the Warlord grumbled.

“Not a military Prime,” Cyclonus emphasized, “A *Prime*. ”

Optimus realized there was going to be a lot to unpack here.

Megatron laughed.

Everyone else was silent.

Optimus culled back, shrinking in on himself slightly. Why he felt embarrassed for following Nova's instruction and looking for the Matrix was a mystery to him. The goal was a matter of survival. Did Megatron not find him worthy? For whatever abstract idea he had of the concept?

“The lineage of the Primes died when the Matrix was ripped from Nova's frame and split in two! You're an idiot looking for ghosts!”

“*Megatron*,” Ratchet reprimanded.

Optimus could almost feel Megatron's gaze bore suddenly into him.

He ignored it, composed himself, and continued, “I spoke to Nova. I'm aware of the situation. Given the council's rewritten history effectively taking the religious position and making bit military, you'll have to forgive my lack of knowledge on the specifics.”

He hadn't particularly wanted to tell Megatron for the helm-ache he would get in a lecture from the warlord. Needless to say the possibility Megatron may fall back on the threat of encasing his spark instead of letting him take the Matrix.

He readied to grab for his axe.

“Optimus,” Megatron's voice was low, “A word in the hallway. Now.”

He wanted to be mad at the warlord. Desperately he did, but for once he had done something right. He had brought back Ratchet *alive*. And the glow of that fact, aided by the addition of Cyclonus, had not yet faded.

Apparently, there was no argument to be had over it. The warlord left quickly, pivoting into the hall before any of them could object. It would warrant a comment later for its rudeness, but Optimus supposed taking the fighting outside would be best for Ratchet.

“It is funny,” Cyclonus hummed. His mouth cocked up into a small smirk, providing a small glimpse of positive emotion.

“Well you're the only one who thinks so kiddo,” Ratchet grumbled in response, “You know Optimus, you shouldn't let him drag you around like that.”

Optimus shrugged. It wasn't as if he actually had much of a choice in the matter if he was being completely honest.

“It's fine,” Optimus mumbled, “But what's so funny?”

Cyclonus looked towards the door and hummed again, rolling his engines in amusement. It piqued Optimus' interest.

“When I'm from, Megatron took to your side of the war. He ended up becoming the head of your council. It is simply amusing to see you two at such odds with another. It was rumoured that you two were seeing each other *behind closed doors*-- ”

Optimus stayed completely silent.

“OPTIMUS!”

Megatron sounded angry.

“Best not keep your council head waiting,” Ratchet spat.

They would need to talk later.

“But-”

At least Ratchet's tone softened marginally, “It’s fine. We'll still be here when you get back.”

They would not corrupt Optimus like that .

His processor was a flurry of accusations. Surely Optimus didn't know exactly *what* he was getting himself into. Even if that stupid bobble still existed in a functioning condition, Optimus couldn't know what he was accepting.

They wouldn't ordain Optimus like they had others. They would not put him on a pedestal and manipulate him like a puppet for the masses. He wouldn't *let* them.

Most importantly, he wouldn't play Optimus right into Nova's claws.

Optimus entered the hall and closed the door behind him. He was quiet, pulling the door closed behind him silently.

“Our deal is off,” Megatron snapped out, harsher than he should have.

Optimus’ optics steeled themselves. For his small frame, on occasion, the mech did achieve quite the intimidating stare. It helped that Optimus had taken him down in battle once before. Determination fed right into his EM field, pooling out in an unrestrained wave.

“Then Ratchet and I shall take our leave,” Optimus’ servo reached back for the door.

“You *know* that is suicide. If not from the Autobots, then from Starscream and you know it,”

Because it was. They both knew it. Optimus was relying entirely on Megatron's army to make it to Iacon. He had no choice. And not to mention his team was still in Megatron's care, another reason Optimus couldn't leave. Not for now at least. When they returned, it may be a new problem.

But Optimus had made choices where none had existed before. Megatron reminded himself of that fact.

Optimus’ servo stopped mid-air, “Nova said it was how I end the time loops. I don't have much of a choice.”

That tired look was back in his optics. It aged him by a good million years.

“Nova?” Megatron couldn't stop the boiling of his spark, “You want to trust Nova Prime?! The mech responsible for the subjugation of whole races of mechs?!”

Optimus shrunk into himself again. He didn't meet Megatron's Optics.

Where was that usual fight in him? Where had the vision of Optimus’ raging fury from the Magnus hammer gone?

“ *Please Megatron,* ” His voice wavered in a way that sounded as if he was losing it. As if he was

slowly losing his ability to put up a fight for it.

It was a contrast from the earlier conversation with Cyclonus and Ratchet. For a brief moment, Megatron questioned if it was a show for his medic. But he had been curious about the solution Cyclonus provided.

So where was the fight?

“Just to the hall of records,” Optimus continued, “at least there I could look for another solution--”

“It’s a *ploy* Optimus! They’re attempting to put another good little civilian in charge. They’ll manipulate you--”

“You’re not listening,” Optimus barely got out for its softness.

“Pardon?”

“Cyclonus was saying,” Optimus cleared a particularly abrasive static out of his vocalizer, “ *My predecessor* . I don’t make it out of this war any more alive than before. And if you must know. Apparently, you were my council head. Or something like that.”

Megatron silenced himself.

Oh.

He had overlooked that detail .

“Not only that, but we’re faced with the demoralizing implication of Cyclonus’ experience that I continue on past what I perceive in a loop.”

That fact seemed to demoralize the little mech the most. With his optics dim, he seemed to compose himself once more with hesitant effort.

“Look. This isn’t going to work if we keep going for each other’s throats--”

:: Lord Megatron!:: Lugnut’s voice came out shrill on his Comm channel. He barely had the self control his temper as it was.

Optimus at least looked him in the optics now, slightly more perked up.

Perhaps the interruption wasn’t so unwelcome after all.

::Lugnut:: Perhaps the two of them could use a small distraction. Let Optimus get back to his medic and time traveller. He would go back to the command deck and deal with whatever Lugnut was intent on this time.

:: My Lord! We approach Rodion! You are needed at the Command deck!::

Megatron immediately turned to Optimus and made a decision.

“Your team will be settled. I will send Ratchet and Cyclonus to greet them if they arrive. We are needed on the command deck. Is that acceptable?”

Optimus thought for a moment, dragging a servo over his battle mask. For a moment Megatron assumed perhaps that Optimus was going to argue but instead he nodded.

“If Ratchet can aid in their repairs, then yes. He’ll throw up a stink if I don’t at least allow him that,” Optimus hummed.

He took a step forward, still with that contemplative look on his face.

Is this what he looks like? When he's coming up with a plan?

It was *fierce*. He walked with a purpose that could rival his own. His optics, though straight forward, held such a glare to them that it looked as if Optimus was glaring through him.

“We need to act fast. The confusion with the loss of their central Intelligence hub will only last so long,” Optimus was so close now, almost touching his face to Megatron's chest, “Do we have any reports from the front line?”

Megatron *should* have been thinking strategy. *Should* be responding with the details from reports he had gone over earlier.

But Optimus was a quiet vision. Like he had been on the battlefield; strong, calculating and without hesitation. Despite his glitch, the small mech radiated a strength to him that Megatron couldn't quite get past. The faint picture of both of them talking strategy late into the night together in the dim light of Megatron's own personal chambers only enhanced the vision.

“The command deck,” Optimus said, “we should get going. Just let me tell Ratchet what's happening first.”

“Ah. Yes, we should.”

Unlike Vos, he had very little in the way of a voice in the decisions this time, likely at Strika's complaint. Despite himself, he was actually sort of glad. With the past day’s events, he hadn't really had time to think of anything substantial. He had been shuffled off quite quickly actually, placed on ground support. That made sense; With the whole no thrusters thing.

What didn't make sense, at least in Optimus’ opinion, was when they assigned him a bodyguard.

“And let you run wild on an open battlefield?” Megatron had scoffed.

“I am fully capable of handling myself thank you,” Optimus had snarked back, letting his tone seep into a vague threat.

“I *know*, ” Somehow, Megatron didn't seem sincere in that statement, “Its fine. In fact, for once I had a mech volunteer to babysit.”

Optimus’ faceplates scrunched up into an offended expression, “So you admit it’s a babysitter?”

Megatron smirked, “Only because it bugs you so.”

They had left each other surprisingly on good terms. In fact, perhaps it had been easier to get along with the warlord with the return of Ratchet. It soothed something in him; something deeper than simply having his friend back.

Their opposing views and the Matrix still hung over them both, like an ominous storm. But it was like they at least temporarily found shelter. It was cramped, uncomfortable and not stable, but it held for now. Long enough to elbow each other loosely.

It distracted him from Bulkhead and Minimus.

Anyways, it was how he ended up here; stood beside Turmoil's second in command and his personal bodyguard.

Deadlock was what you'd call 'Decepticon small-- Autobot big'. He stood at almost the average between the two. But his black, grey and red paint job still screamed Decepticon. Effectively, he seemed to be a larger and more sense for of Blurr's frame type. Why he had volunteered or even How he knew about him was still a mystery. But a mystery he didn't quite have the time to dedicate any resources to.

They stood in the command deck of Turmoil's ship, idly drifting in position as they waited for their final commands to advance.

It was tense.

And not because he was about to attack a city.

Deadlock whistled his vents lightly in a sort of boredom; it was obviously starting to bother Turmoil.

"Would you *shut--* "

"So Optimus," Deadlock's timing couldn't have been an accident, "Been causing quite a stir in upper command."

"An understatement, and tact-less as usual Deadlock," Turmoil hissed.

Oh fuck, this was going to get awkward wasn't it?

Why couldn't Megatron just give the order already? He really didn't need to get involved in some petty squabble between two Decepticon Officers. But it was seemingly not his decision.

"Yeah, I heard about the whole, Starscream thing. Saw you fighting Megatron too," Deadlock hummed.

"You should have seen him flip and pin barricade at the Vos meeting."

Why, *why* did they have to talk about him? Couldn't they bring up something more productive? Like Rodion's infrastructure? Or even their paint jobs?

"Say," Deadlock perked up as if he'd been waiting to ask the question for a while now, "You're an Autobot. Do you know Ratchet by chance?"

"I'm not an Autobot," Optimus corrected.

Turmoil's engine rumbled dangerously, "would you give it up with your god damned medic kink already?"

He would have dismissed it, let the two of them argue it out except for the mention of Ratchet's name.

"What do you want with *my* medic," He emphasized the possession. Ratchet likely would have objected to it, but in this situation, he thought he would forgive him.

Deadlock's posture switched almost immediately from formal to something more relaxed as he

spun on his heel and landed his aft on the corner of Turmoil's console. He looked smug, as he pulled his arms across his chest and smiled.

"Your Medic?" Deadlock tilted his head up, "The medic *I* saved during the invasion on Kaon? The one *I* got to Cyclonus?" Deadlock sounded almost threatening in His accusations.

Immediately, Optimus' put a few things together.

"So, he was with you the last few days?"

Deadlock smirked as if he had achieved something, "Yeah, and I'm looking for where he ended up. Can't leave you Autobots alone too long. You might get *hurt with all these bad Decepticons around*."

The threat-- the explicit 'tell me where he is or *else*' felt like a smack to Optimus' face. It was enough to force his optics to reset causing him to blink indignantly for a moment. He expected this from Shockwave, or Starscream and even Megatron, but some no-name Decepticon who was with Ratchet when his arms were damaged?

Turmoil caught on quickly, "Deadlock. *Shut. Up.*"

"What?" Deadlock almost *chuckled*, "It's not like he has the hammer or his wings anymore."

Turmoil snapped now, turning away from his console and back to his second in command. His visor screamed with a threat, that his battle mask couldn't quite display.

"Seriously. Deadlock. For once in your pathetic, gutter licking *life*. Would you *shut? The frag. Up.*"

Deadlock hummed, "You scared he's gonna find out what the medic was doing chained to your berth?"

Turmoil did panic then, his field flaring with angry desperation, "I didn't even get to *touch* him! You're the one who mutilated him!"

Optimus cleared his throat, fending off the vicious hunger in his spark.

"The first chance I get I'm going to rip both of your spikes off, and shove them down each other's throats," he paused for a moment, contemplating, "The first moment that optics aren't on you-- the first moment I find out high command isn't looking I'll leave you both armless things, spikes down your throats and optics ripped out."

Deadlock sneered as if about to retort with something back. Turmoil had the self-preservation to stay silent.

Optimus' attention turned instead to Turmoil's console. He leaned over, bringing a servo up to tap something in. In front of them, the command screen came to life, a select few code words sprawled across it.

"Oh," Optimus said, "That's the signal. We should get going."

Somewhere on the deck, one of the lower ranked mechs coughed awkwardly.

They landed just behind the already destroyed Autobot barricade.

As a ship carrying ground troops, they were signalled to come in the second wave; directed to try and get *behind* the Autobot's and surround them. And in doing so, the fighting had already begun by the time their bay doors opened, allowing them to pour onto the ground, joined by several other teams on their flanks. They drove; it was a faster approach.

It was loud, louder than their battles on earth. Loud, and littered with shrapnel from the fighting. It was concerning, destruction this far out of the city. He didn't allow himself to worry.

Deadlock stayed by his side as they advanced. Steady. Their place in formation had them pretty much dead center. In short, his vision was limited as they reached the city outskirts. He didn't care.

Decepticon ground troops weren't more than glorified cleaners or in Deadlock's case, an assassin. Save for the standouts like Strika, Shockwave and a handful of others, they were reserved for attacks like this as far as Optimus knew.

Before them, further into the city, he could see exactly how far the Decepticon's had been able to push the Autobot's back. It hadn't come as a surprise; Rodion's forces were ill-prepared for a full on attack, and it was likely the Autobots were only hearing of Vos' now.

Optimus continued to not think too hard as they drove forward. He didn't think about the vacant housing on the outskirts. He didn't think about the occasional blaster fire.

He had almost completely dissociated from the situation when something caught his eye. A flash. Deeper in the city.

He stopped.

The mechs behind him kept driving, and it took a minute for Deadlock to follow suit. He had transformed already when his babysitter came to a screaming halt ahead of him.

Optimus' optics kept to the sky.

It wasn't possible.

Deadlock finally transformed and stalked back to him and yelled, "Are you FRAGGING stupid?! Get back to the group!"

Optimus ignored him, instead, he reached for his axe.

"The slag are you trying to pull--"

And then it happened again.

A flash, distantly. Off near the city. Bright. White. Reaching to the sky, *grounding itself on surrounding buildings.*

Lighting.

Optimus pointed with his axe.

"That way," He said as he started walking.

"That way?!" Deadlock yelled after him, "Towards the front liners?! You crazy?!"

Optimus simply harrumphed, not too concerned about what Deadlock would decide to do. With a few more accelerated steps, he transformed and proceeded to separate from the group.

He didn't wait for Deadlock to follow.

He pushed his petal to the floor and made for the city center, and towards the source of the lightning.

There was only one thing that could cause a storm like that so localized and so close to the ground.

It seems Ultra Magnus is back in the fray.

Optimus wished he had a reason to drive back into the worst of the fighting. It was more of a compulsion than a logical decision, and for that, he scolded himself. But still he drove; compelled by some imaginary force back to... to what exactly?

To Ultra Magnus? To a mech he had ripped motor components out of? It was more likely he just wanted the hammer back; that he could rationalize. That was logical-- that had a reason behind it.

Or perhaps. Maybe. In light of Megatron's current, he didn't want to say kindness, he was drawn towards *him* in the heat of the fighting. No doubt he would be in face first if the Magnus was here.

No. Definitely not.

Rodion wasn't a difficult city to navigate. Like most of Cybertron, it's upper roads had been built with efficiency in mind. Combine that with the fact a lot of it had been abandoned with the Decepticons exile and population drop, meant the roads were clear with the exception of rubble from the fighting.

He knew he was approaching on the main fighting when the first signs of carnage laid out in the main roadway. Again, he didn't think on it much further than that. The occasional burst of lightning continued to guide him towards the deep of the city and soon enough flight frames streaked the skies above him.

Eventually, he hit the fighting.

What saved him was his brand. With the signal he emitted, the Decepticons at least knew he was an ally as he approached on the back of their defensive line. Though, he did still receive double takes for his size and colouring as he transformed and approached.

He was lucky, he had walked himself right into a Decepticon encampment; flanked by one of the smaller warships.

The light all but hypnotized him; driving him forward despite the first few Decepticons that gave him confused stares. Most of them were medics or engineers; mechs who stayed mostly behind the lines for support.

It was easy to weave through them simply based on his smaller size, but eventually, someone caught up with him. As the hand came down on his shoulder, he jumped, honking loudly. Several rushing mechs stopped for a moment to look for the source of the disruption before skirting off to what they were doing.

“And what exactly are you doing here?”

Optimus turned coming face to face with a familiar medic.

“Hook?”

“I thought you were with the ground troops,” Hook raised an optical ridge as if to scold him, but another mech came swiftly behind him, gripping the larger mech's shoulder.

Optimus didn't recognize the mech, but he looked so similar to the other mech Optimus had to make sure he wasn't seeing double.

And then another one joined them. And another. And another; until Optimus thought, he had finally lost himself to another processor glitch. All of them were bulky- on the side of large even for Decepticons and a tacky green and purple combination.

“Awe!” one of them coo-ed, “He looks like he’s never seen a gestalt before!”

Hook hissed at him, “He probably hasn’t.”

“You guys know we’re supposed to be headed out right? Like, Strika is expecting us like 5 clicks ago--”

“The front lines?” Optimus asked, “Towards Magnus right? Take me with you!”

All six of them either sneered or frowned. The largest one, who seemed to be their leader, spoke, “But Megatron said you--”

“Frag Megatron. If he gets pissed you can deal with me!”

They looked between each other before their optics set on Hook who swore as he answered.

“Fine. But it's your funeral.”

Optimus had never *ridden* another mech before. He had never *seen* anything like *Devastator before*. He didn't even *know mechs could combine like that save for the jet-twins*.

Needless to say, the experience was full of firsts.

Devastator had put Optimus quite securely on his shoulder as they waded through most of the fighting. It wasn't the fastest method of travel, but it kept him out of the fighting.

The compulsion in his chest settled marginally as they continued to approach. Still, with every bolt of lighting, his spark all but lurched until he couldn't quite take it anymore.

It was the moment he saw Megatron's back plating over one of Rodion's towers.

There was a hesitance there, in his spark. It battled with the compulsion and it took a moment for him to recognize exactly why. Part of him, however small, was nervous to see Ultra Magnus again.

But the compulsion won out.

“Throw me!”

Devastator seemingly didn't hear him at first, and so he stood and repeated himself-- this time pointing towards where he had seen Megatron.

“Throw!” Devastator shouted, grabbing Optimus harshly.

The combiner didn't position him, or consider his trajectory or ever really aim. But he did Chuck him like some sort of rotten insect in the direction Optimus had designated.

The wind overtook his audials and for a moment, it reminded him of flying. At least it did, up until he started to descend.

Oh. This was a bad idea.

He crashed into the glass of one of the towers. He rolled onto his shoulder to attempt to roll out of his fall but misjudged it; instead tumbling painfully until coming to rest on his back. It felt as if he had scraped away most of the paint on his dorsal plating and for a moment he simply laid there and groaned.

It was quiet for a moment except for the distant ambient noise.

And then the far wall busted open.

Megatron burst in through the wall brandishing both of his swords. Behind him a bolt of lightning flashed past his opening.

With every intention to bust through the other side of the building and circle around, the surprise on Megatron's face was tangible as he pushed his thrusts hard to stop.

“The frag are you doing here?” Megatron hissed at him, landing at his pedes. He was covered in blast marks, making his plating black in some areas. The only dents he supported were from crashing into things.

Optimus raised a hand as if to ask for a moment to finish catching his vents.

“Get back to Turmoil’s team or so help me primus I will get Strika to babysit you next time!”

Optimus finally found the vent to speak. Still racing from his launch only one word came out, “-- Hammer --”

“The slagging hammer?!? Did you come all the way out here for the slagging hammer? As if I wouldn’t give it to you?! How long will it take you to figure out I *am helping you--* ”

“ *Optimus Prime.* I have been looking for you. ”

A single blue servo gripped the edge of the opening Megatron had made. Following it, game another servo; one that gripped the Magnus Hammer and propped itself on an elbow. It gave the owner enough leverage to hoist themselves up, and in doing so revealed Ultra Magnus in his full glory.

From his place on the floor, the smallest of the three sat up.

“Magnus,” Optimus greeted, “How's the arm?”

“Step down Optimus,” Ultra Magnus’ stoic tone didn't waver, “and perhaps you can live out the rest of the days in the stockades.”

Megatron passed a quizzical look between them before raising his cannon once again towards the Magnus.

Optimus took the pause to stand and dust himself off.

Taking the cannon as a threat (which it was) the first sounds of the Magnus hammer sparking back to life caught his audials. In his own response, he drew his axe and readied his stance. That earned him a glare from Megatron. He was the least armed, but not vulnerable. Though looking back, he likely would have bothered Strika for a blaster at the strategy meeting had he known he was going to end up between both of the most dangerous Cybertronians.

Megatron was the first to fire.

Magnus was ready and dipped. Bringing himself just low enough to dodge the blast yet at the same time giving himself the leverage to charge forward. To Megatron's credit, he took the full force of the tackle, sending them both flying out of the hole Optimus had made on his way in.

Really? Optimus thought to himself, *I guess we're doing this then.*

Optimus kept his helm raised as he approached the hole once again, took a deep vent and launched himself out of the tower.

And once again, he was falling.

He fell, and this high up- with this far to fall, he had the time if brief, to think.

Why hadn't seeing Magnus bothered him?

The anxiety of seeing him had bothered him earlier but now? Nothing. It was odd, as if the entire encounter felt much like a dream. Something fundamental had shifted since their last encounter; Optimus just hadn't yet quite put his digit on him yet.

Well, he was approaching the ground quite quickly now.

With one servo he extended the poll of his axe, digging it into the tower and with the other, he shot his grapples up and caught on a ledge. His momentum carried him into a swing and he could see where Ultra Magnus had landed.

He had resorted to turning the fight back into a ranged fight, shooting at a surprisingly graceful Megatron.

They needed a plan.

"Megatron!"

The warlord turned at his call, positioning himself at the last moment to catch Optimus out of his swing. He was caught awkwardly and shuffled quickly to the center of Megatron's chest as he twisted to absorb the momentum of Optimus' jump. The slow down cost Megatron a hit to his back; the charge discharging between the two of them.

"I really hope you have a good reason for this," Megatron ground out as he twisted once again. Now balanced, his speed returned to him and he was back to dodging to the best of his ability.

"We need a *plan*-- "

"No shit. Care to share how you got that infernal Hammer from him *last time* ?"

It was difficult not to shift awkwardly in Megatron's grasp and throw off their weight distribution once again, but somehow he shook his embarrassment, "It was in close quarters; it was easy to use

his weight and size against him. And back then well, he wasn't exactly trying to *kill* me."

Megatron stayed silent at that but did arc his back into a backwards spiral as he once again changed their flight path.

"I can work with that," Megatron said, "if I can get you in an enclosed place, do you think you can give a repeat performance?"

Optimus nodded.

And so, they had a plan.

It was a series of dips and dives to get them actually close enough for Megatron to accurately shoot their enemy. *Enemy*; Optimus couldn't quite place when that title had shifted from Megatron to Ultra Magnus but it had. And as they drew closer, they started working together. It took Optimus no time to realize that he could lean with Megatron's weight, adding to their agility. Combine that with using his axe as a lightning rod when they were close enough to the ground and they actually felt like a team.

It was a moment of pure collaboration that actually brought them up to Magnus in a way that Megatron got an actual shot in. Ultra Magnus was thrown back, giving them the chance to actually land on the roadway.

Megatron brought them down on their pedes and they separated finally, both approaching in a sprint. Megatron got to him first, and with a slash, if his sword had Ultra Magnus tumbling backwards once again. Optimus got behind him, throwing himself onto the larger mech and grappling for the hammer.

His small size meant it took no time for Ultra Magnus to get on top of him. The hammer, now gripped by both of them sparked but did not activate for the conflicting commands sent between the two of them.

"*Where is the Matrix?*" He hissed. With the Magnus Hammer choosing to not listen to either of them, he opted to push the thing down on Optimus, forcing his full weight down on him.

It was suffocating. *Crushing* . And if he didn't do something now his windshield was going to crack--

The resulting *Thud* of Megatron kicking Ultra Magnus off him had ozone flooding back into his vents. Megatron helped him up, and once again they were shooting forward.

"Down!" Optimus yelled, and seemingly Megatron got the idea, crouching just in time.

Using his pole axe he launched himself over the warlord, diving for Ultra Magnus's legs as Megatron came back up and shot him straight in the chest plates. It was enough to have them cascading off the side of the roadway and once again into free fall; grappling with each other intensely.

"The Warlord's pet," Ultra Magnus hissed violently at him, punctuated by a punch to his side.

His scar on that side tore under the pressure, opening his internals to the cool rush of air as they fell. It ripped a violent scream from him.

"You know after reading that little history report you gave that Cyber-ninja of yours, I thought you would have *loathed* Megatron," This time the punch to his side dented the fragile plating around

his scar inward, sending metal shrapnel into the delicate mesh of his side.

“Yet here you are, helping to lead a massacre on your own. You are a plague Optimus. You and those warframes you so easily submit yourself to. I should have gotten rid of you when Elita-one took her tumble. Too bad the best cover up I could provide was that of a *demotion*. ”

Something was wrong here. Something purely and utterly *rotten* . The Magnus didn't sound like himself. This wasn't even his usual brand of rhetoric. It sounded odd, like he was repeating something someone had told him.

It didn't sit right.

“You are no *Autobot* ! Tell me where the Matrix is!”

“SHUT UP!” Finally, *finally*, the hammer jolted to life between them.

The colour show was spectacular as if their combined resolve manifested itself out of the hammer. It was marvellous, beautiful in a spectrum of colours that Optimus had never even seen before. It was beautiful as it wrapped around the two of them. In their free fall, the colours trailed and streaked behind them.

Yet the colour was not a distraction from the pain. Hot and burning each vibrant beautiful streak of spectrum brought with it a new version of that same scathing shock to his systems. It paralyzed him, and for a brief moment, the approaching ground was as much as a threat as the mech in front of him.

And then, like a long-awaited breath in drowning vents, darkness appeared in the light.

The black servo grabbed once for him and missed. But it did not give up, and on its second try, it dipped down further, wrapping itself around his free forearm. And then, it pulled.

And relief.

Megatron's pull had him immediately up and held securely in his arms. His thrusters roared as they slowed their decent. It almost covered the sound of Ultra Magnus crashing into the gutters below.

“You *broke it*? ”

It took a minute for Megatron's gruff question to register and another click for him to realize why he had asked it.

In his servo, still tightly grasped as if the paralyzing light still overtook him was the broken pole of the Magnus Hammer itself.

Optimus' spark spluttered and so did his intake.

“Hush,” Megatron scowled, and for a moment Optimus feared retribution for his mistake. His vents ceased and he stiffened, causing his open wound on his side to jolt violently.

The landed and Megatron finished his sentiment, “We will make due. Can you still fight? It will be far easier down here.”

It calmed him marginally.

Rodion's lowest levels, the gutters, were cramped. The alley they had descended into was barely wide enough for Megatron to fit; the perfect place to face down Ultra Magnus. It would work with

their combined injuries.

“I think so,” Optimus shifted out of Megatron's arms and up to stand, “Yes. *Yes* . My side will hold.”

Megatron pointed to a trail leading down the alleyway, “Will it hold long enough to give chase?”

Optimus swallowed and gripped his side yet still attempted to hold his composure.

Megatron stiffened and blinked a few times before reaching for his comm array. They passed confused looks, and as if trying to include Optimus in the conversation spoke loudly.

“Have the ground forces cut them off. They’re closest to their rear. Ultra Magnus has escaped through Rodion's underbelly. I will return to the Nemesis immediately and we will give chase.”

His hand fell and he confirmed Optimus’ suspicion, “The Autobots are retreating.”

It was a relief. Enough of one to let Optimus relax and lean himself up on the wall.

“We should get back--”

“We have larger problems Megatron.”

At that, the larger of the two raised an optical ridge.

“He knows Megatron. He has my datapad and he *knows* and we don’t have the upper hand anymore,” it felt crushing now he could process it, and once again his vents ceased for a moment.

“Relax,” Megatron strode over and laid his own hand over the one covering Optimus’ wound in his side. The touch was firm, made to stop the bleeding.

It hadn't registered until now how much they had been touching during the fight. But now, with Megatron purposely touching one of his scars in a way mention to *help* the realization came crashing down. Yet somehow, for as odd as it was the touch *was* reassuring.

He wanted to purr his engine for the sheer realization he could do *this* . Yet somehow he refrained from doing so.

“Something is still bugging you,” It wasn't a question.

“He said something, I didn’t comprehend it at first,” Optimus ground out, “But I think we’re not the only ones looking for the Matrix.”

Chapter End Notes

Thank you, everyone, for the overwhelming feedback for the last chapter. You have no idea how much it's helped me power through this chapter. Thank you, everyone.

NEXT TIME

The depressing chapter I wanted to write.

Ratchet deals with Jazz's betrayal along with a team that's seemingly falling apart.

Prowl has another vision.

The Room Where It Happened

Chapter Summary

With Bumblebee and Blitzwing's secret out, Ratchet has no choice but decide what to do about it-- but it would be easier to hit uninjured mechs over the helm with his wrench.

Prowl gets an encore of last time.

Optimus faces a dilemma.

Chapter Notes

UPDATE EARLY WHOOO

I blame the weather lol.

Enjoy! and thank you all so much!

poorly edited as usual.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“So,” Ratchet cleared his vocalizer, “You’re a time traveller. That's uh, interesting I guess.”

Both him and Cyclonus stood at attention in the docking bay of Kaon's newly made main base. Now repaired Ratchet and Cyclonus both had unofficially been appointed to deal with Optimus’ business. And though Ratchet didn't see any reason to put the Decepticon in such a high position it became obvious that the Decepticons around him did. So for now, at least until Optimus came back, they would have to work together.

Now, if they could just make it less *awkward* .

“Yes,” Cyclonus hummed, “It had been quite the experience.”

Around them, Decepticons buzzed. The ship coming from Vos’ outer edge didn't just contain Prowl and the rest of them, but also a slew of Starscream's seekers who had returned after seeing the state of Vos. According to Cyclonus, the situation and loyalties we're extremely complicated at the moment. Each seeker would have to be screened individually in case of infiltration.

Cyclonus piped up again, “So. Um. If you don't mind me asking, how has Prowl been these last few years?”

Ratchet turned to the mech beside him and raised an eyebrow.

“He was my commanding officer. Well to be more exact, my commanding officer's commanding officer. He was the one who recommended me to Perceptor for this mission.”

This mission, going *back in time and stop a war that destroys the planet*.

“Ya sound like this was some sort of great honour. Makes you sound like a *kiss aft* .”

Cyclonus straightened as if proud of that fact, “It is an honour. Especially one that involves my Prime himself.”

Oh, slag. He's a fanatic.

Which explained his awkwardness around Optimus, to begin with. To make it worse, if Cyclonus was to be believed, Optimus army was large. Ratchet, in turn, had questions about how often he had actually spoken with Optimus if he was that far down the command chain.

Primus, this was just going to get more awkward isn't it?

“And what? Optimus’ predecessor wasn’t worth sticking around for?” At least this was better than silence. And chances were Optimus would appreciate the information anyways.

“*Rodimus Prime* is an embarrassment,” Cyclonus’ hushed himself as if someone may hear him, “I was surprised when Megatron accepted him as an ally despite almost everyone's concern.”

“What’s this about Rodimus?”

Shockwave approached from seemingly nowhere. He strode to stand beside them; mimicking their professional posture. Sometimes it was hard to believe Shockwave had been a Prime himself.

“Sorry to be the aft in the room, but Blurr ain’t gonna wanna see ya, Senator,” Ratchet rolled his optics.

Shockwave's stoicism gave nothing away except for the tilt of his antenna backwards. It was the only indication of what Ratchet assumed was aggravation he was trying to depict.

“Do not call me Senator,”

“Wait,” Cyclonus leaned over to look at Shockwave a little more directly, “like *Council Senator*? Like under a Prime?”

Ratchet crossed his arms, “I knew ya as Senator Shockwave; I'll call you Senator Shockwave. Now frag off, Blurr's going to throw a fragging fit if he sees you around here.”

“If this is about crumpling Blurr up into a cube multiple times I'll have you know that it didn’t actually *happen* in this time loop and such should not be a factor--”

Ratchet finally met Shockwave's optic and mustered about as much spite as he could. It put Optimus’ glare to shame, “Nah mech. This is about you sending the Elite guard to arrest us. But I'm sure Blurr will have some choice words about the whole crushing thing, *Senator*. Or maybe the living commlink thing? ”

That shut Shockwave up for a moment.

It didn't shut Cyclonus up.

“You never said you got to work for an actual *Prime during the golden age*,” Cyclonus all but beamed for as much as his usual grump could allow.

“It is not a time I wish to revisit,” Shockwave said.

“Wait. Cyclonus. How old are you?”

Cyclonus seemed to pause at that as if he had to count the years. It took a moment of calculations before he came out with a plain, “nine hundred?”

“Nine Hundred thousand quite young to be working on Strika's team-”

“No,” Cyclonus cleared his vocalizer, “ *Just* nine hundred. Kinda. It’s a bit complicated If I’m honest.”

Both Ratchet and Shockwave gaped.

Cyclonus’ expression went from embarrassed to defensive immediately. He stood proudly, regaining his composure as if the other mechs would look down on him for not keeping it throughout the conversation.

“Nine *hundred*, ” Shockwave asked again.

“If you must know I was forged on earth so *yes* I am that young. It means nothing.”

No wonder he acted like an awestruck sparkling at times and a moody teenager the rest; because he was one. It made Ratchet drag a service down his face. He was co-leading with a child sent on a mission that would likely fail. It was a testament to the mech's skill on one servo and his luck on the other.

“How did you end up so high up at nine hundred years old? And when did mechs start being forged on *Earth* of all places,” Ratchet repeated it as if it would somehow become more plausible the more he said it.

“I had a major reformat when I was something like a hundred and fifty. Processor and spark issues,” Cyclonus spoke as if giving a report, “I believe you may have known me as a Starscream clone at some point--”

And with that, the bay doors opened. The approaching engines drowned out what was left of their conversation. Ratchet almost yelled one last time for Shockwave to beat it but it seemed to be of no use discouraging the scientist. Blurr would do a good enough job of it coming up anyways.

They stayed put as the ship docked, watching workers proceed with whatever needed to be done around the bay.

The first mechs off the shuttle were seekers. The injured came next and with it the first sightings of the crew.

Blitzwing came out first. Ratchet knew a bad case when he saw one. As the medic on board pushed the unconscious mech past them ratchet got a good look at the patchwork they had done so far. There was no doubt his T-cog was completely blown. A mech like Blitzwing-- that being a mech who's everyday Life required transformation; well he likely wouldn't be online until major repairs could be done.

What was more interesting, was Bumblebee's frantic chasing of the gurney, almost running to keep in stride with Blitzwing and the medic's.

His call out to the mech was cut short by a separate call.

“- Ratchet is that you?!”

The collision against his side is what really startled him though, but a glance down revealed it's friendly nature.

“Prowl?”

Prowl had come up and knocked him playfully as if genuinely unsure what to do other than a hug. Still, the droop of his visor and EM field portrayed a cautious excitement.

“Look, I know the mess in earth was kinda my fault and I haven’t had the chance to really *talk* to Optimus and oh frag I’m just so happy to see you again and-”

He couldn't help himself. Prowl fell silent when Ratchet actually wrapped his arms around him. To anyone's face, the old medic likely would have never admitted to actually embracing the other so desperately, but he could deal with the blow to his image later.

Yet somehow the moment still felt bittersweet. Constantly the group would miss each other by fractions, passing like ships in the night, and in this case, there was no possibility for Bulkhead to get to see them again. But at least now they were making the effort to regroup and actually be successful.

Tentatively, Prowl returned the gesture.

“Where is Optimus? I expected him to be here upon arrival, and given the situation, I'm surprised he isn't. In fact, if he isn't around I don't exactly feel comfortable staying alone on a base of *Decepticons* .”

Blurr's voice caught all of their attention, and slowly they separated.

Shockwave answered Immediately, “Rodion. With Megatron.”

The expression on Blurr's face went from that of a reporting agent to that of a mech tasting spoiled rations. He looked as if he wanted to burst forward but thought better of it. Instead, he stood where he had come off the ship; hand tightly gripping Jazz's shoulder.

Prowl looked to their side and paused, “Are you... Cyclonus?”

Cyclonus’ playing flared, “Prowl!”

“Oh-kay,” Brainstorm thankfully stepped in, “so like. Not to break up these emotional reunions or whatever, but if we could just, I don't know? Contact Optimus somehow?”

Ratchet crossed his arms, “Unfortunately Optimus is back in repairs last we heard after a run in with Magnus. I wouldn’t put it past Megatron to try and keep us apart again though so who knows when we’ll be able to comm him.”

Prowl's jaw set itself and his EM field pulled in. Ratchet was starting to get the sinking feeling they really needed to talk to Optimus. But he couldn't quite peg *why*.

He tried to meet Jazz's optics, “It’s nice to see our fragged band of misfits has expanded, welcome to the smelting fire.”

Jazz nodded slightly, but otherwise looked away,

Ah. So there was something there.

“Well, we have somewhat of a quarters to ourselves. We should probably hear there and catch up a

bit,” Ratchet attempted to usher them out of the loading bay.

“We should,” Prowl's expression turned dark, “ to say We need to discuss a few things is an understatement.”

He found Bumblebee curled up into himself down the hallway of the medical bay. He was small, to begin with, but with his knees pulled up so close to his chest Bumblebee was dwarfed by the hallway around him. With his head down on his knees, it took Ratchet a moment to realize that he wasn't sleeping.

Still, the small mech didn't recognize Ratchet's presence until he actually sat down beside him. As if snapped from his thoughts, Bumblebee jumped slightly as Ratchet's aft hit the floor. The medic's joints creaked and for a moment he mumbled to himself about the age of them.

Bumblebee just stared at him, optics wide and mouth pursed into a thin line.

Ratchet sighed, “Yeah kid. I know.”

Bumblebee looked horrified at that and immediately babbled, “It isn't *wrong* ! Okay! We aren't Autobot's anymore and we weren't when it happened! We were gonna die Ratchet he was just trying to protect me! And what's it your business anyway?! Oh slag just *please please* don't tell Optimus--”

Ratchet crossed his arms, “I'm not going to tell Optimus kid.”

“Frag thank you Ratchet--”

“You are.”

Bumblebee shot up, fists clenched at his sides as he looked like he was about to start shouting. But looking to the door to his left something changed in his childlike tantrum and instead, he glared. His voice came down an octave and Ratchet realized he was attempting to be *quiet* .

“Fragging... Optimus will literally throw us both out. And if Megs ever found out, he'd kill us. You *can't* tell them. Blitzwing's in there torn to pit because he helped us, you can't throw him to the cyber wolves. *Please*,” Bumblebee glanced to the medical bay door once again before gritting his teeth and took a long vent, trying to steady himself and failing miserably. The build-up emotion expressed itself in a static hitch in his vocalizer, “There's nowhere else for us to go now.”

Ratchet could see the fluid start to pool along the bottom edge of his optics. He patted the place next to him where Bumblebee had been sitting. Bumblebee understood and sat down, curling in on himself.

“How?”

Bumblebee had never been one to control himself but the pool that came from his lip plates was immense. His vents hitched as he spoke of fond meetings on the beach, their awkward dancing around each other on their mission for their transwarp drive and finally their bonding in a desperate but affectionate attempt to survive the invasion. When he got to the bit about Vos', his vents hitched a little harder and static came over him.

Ratchet lifted a servo and slowly rubbed the mech's back.

“I tried to stabilize him! I really did!” Bumblebee sobbed, “Sentinel shot him right in the T-cog! He’s a triple changer! They say he might not be able to transform ever again! Even if he does wake up!”

He dissolved into incoherence then; babbling something about Jazz and Prowl and harpoon guns.

And then he mentioned Bulkhead's name and descended into a whole new incoherence-- this time without recognizable words.

The kid needed the chance to let it out, but there was no reason to let it go on longer than it had to. Tentatively, Ratchet wrapped an arm around the mech's shaking shoulders. He hushed him slowly, rubbing circles along the smaller's plating-- a technique he picked up consoling high and upset mech in the dead end. And eventually, it did the trick.

Bumblebee's hitching sob slowed to a static hum his systems. With the pent up emotion now gone, his limbs hung loosely in his ball. Occasionally his vents would hitch once again, but overall the mech looked *exhausted*.

“There. That’s better. So tell me why you’re out here on the floor,” Ratchet encouraged, attempting to prevent another sobbing fit.

“-ey won’t let me in. Won’t recognize the bond cuz of some stupid tradition thing. - bonded wrong. I just wanna see him Ratch,” he was almost impossible to understand but Ratchet pieced together the general meaning.

Ratchet pulled a datapad from his subspace and scrolled down on the files it contained, “I’ll make you a deal, alright?”

Bumblebee turned his head, looking at him with curious optics.

“I’ll let you in, you can curl up on his good side if only to settle your bond--”

Bumblebee perked up, half uncurling with newfound energy. His optics were hopeful if a bit stunned.

“and you tell Optimus the full story when he gets back. Deal?”

Bumblebee nodded enthusiastically.

“You have to get me out of here,” Jazz was practically begging at this point, “Prowl, *please*. You know what Megatron will do. You know Optimus won’t protect me anymore-- you *know*. ”

From Optimus's berth Prowl watched Jazz look between both him and Blurr. Neither dignified the plea with a response and the room fell back into relative silence as Jazz's vents continued to hitch every so often.

Blurr occupied himself writing something down on a datapad-- always the one to document a report. In this case, a rewrite of Vos’ events with Jazz's betrayal included this time.

Time was something they had at the moment. Optimus wouldn't be back until the day shift, Ratchet was spending the night in the medical bay, and they were stuck on Jazz-sitting duty. Brainstorm he runs off somewhere as well; no one had seen him since they landed.

Still, everyone and a while Jazz would pipe up, “You can’t... Prowl, please. *Please*. You know what Tarn will do. You *saw* what the DJD would do. *Please* ! ”

Prowl crossed his legs, straightened his spine and took a long vent. He *would not* attack Jazz again. He needed to have self-control. He needed to wait until Optimus got back.

“They’ll torture me! They’ll *execute me!* ”

Prowl *snapped* .

“Like Minimus?” he stood, meditation broken, “Like Bulkhead? Like Cliffjumper?”

Jazz pulled back from his place on the floor, ramrod straight. The stasis cuffs kept his arms forward; a formality more than anything. It was obvious Jazz could get out of them if he tried hard enough.

Jazz shut up.

“What? Now you have nothing to say?!” Prowl stood above Jazz now, fists clenching and unclenching compulsively.

From the doorway, Blurr glanced up from his datapad.

Jazz mumbled something.

Prowl stopped his hand from flying across Jazz's face, “Speak up.”

“There was no choice. If I didn't-- Sentinel would have taken us all, I was saving us Prowl. I told you that, you have to understand--”

Prowl felt his visor dim, “You could have told us! You could have told *me!* We've fought against the Decepticon army you don't think we could have handled Sentinel!”

“You don't know that for sure! You don't know him! And how many times has Optimus betrayed the Autobots!”

Prowl couldn't stop himself from lashing out that time, and without thinking his hand collided with the side of Jazz's face with a satisfying clang of metal.

And then. *He was gone.*

The faint nausea and helm throb were a little more familiar this time around. It still took him a moment to realize exactly what was happening but once he did, it was easier to relax. The void around him cradled his form, drifting slowly along.

And then his processor glitched and he was standing in some sort of command deck. In Front of him, Optimus sat at the head of the table, pouring over some sort of report. He looked stressed, but not completely exhausted as usual.

“I hate to say how well you did,” Optimus motioned to Prowl's side. His processor glitched again, revealing another mech.

The silhouette was familiar, but the almost matte black paint job was not. Still, a sense of pride washed over Prowl as Optimus spoke, though it seemed to be directed at the other mech.

*“What? Cuz ya can’t handle someone else getting the job done for once?” **Jazz.***

Optimus ran a hand down his faceplates, “No, because you took out three of Nominus’ high command out in their recharge. It was tactless.”

“But effective,” Prowl heard himself interject, “their command will be in shambles for weeks. It’s given us enough time to finally regroup with Megatron’s forces. We needed this.”

Optimus bowed his head and rubbed his comm array harshly. Prowl could feel the anxiousness roll off his own frame; it would be a problem of Optimus got mad. Jazz may be sent to the bright for weeks all because he authorized a Spec ops to move and Jazz had been successful and-

Slowly, a hand intertwined with his and he calmed.

Tentatively, he looked up to meet Jazz's gaze. He squeezed Prowl's hand.

“As much as I hate to admit it, yes. We needed this. But I can’t let you off easy for this,” Optimus stood, “You’re both suspended until further notice.”

Further notice usually meant 'until my paperwork piles up again'. Apparently, this happened frequently.

They both nodded and turned to go but a ping from Optimus stopped them.

“That being said sometimes I don’t know know what I’d do without you two.”

“PROWL!”

The vision shattered this time. He almost staggered backwards, as if the force of his designation actually had weight as it slammed into him. Blurr's blue plating had him squinting in its contrast from the vision conference room. He realized, after another shake of his shoulders from Blurr, that he had stopped venting and took the effort to manually reset them.

He glanced down at Jazz who looked concerned from his place on the floor.

“The frag was that?” he murmured.

Prowl took a long vent and tilted his helmet back. There was no fiddling around with what that meant, though he would loathe to admit it out loud.

“I think--” Prowl wheezed through his vents and leaned on Blurr a little more, “I think that was the universe telling me to save Jazz.”

The three of them had little privacy. Separated only by insulation sheets to the other injured of the base, it wasn't uncommon someone would pop in to get a look in. Mostly medics, and most glaring at *him* rather than at the two in the berth so desperately intertwined.

Well, that's what he got for transferring Blitzwing under his direct care. They would just have to deal with it.

Ratchet tried to not make a habit of falling asleep still plugged into someone's medical port. It could be jarring to one's system to wake up connected to some junkie trying to rip your diagnostic cable apart. During the war, it increased the pass of malicious code. Yet somehow Ratchet kept getting him into situations where it was needed.

In this case, there was no way he was going to let Blitzwing online without him, and the easiest way to do that was to stay connected. It was a matter of safety-- for Bumblebee's case.

Their bonding came as a surprise yet at the same time a well-needed explanation for Blitzwing's behaviour. And it was that, the stories of Blitzwing protecting his conjunx (that still sounded wrong somehow) and the rest of them that saved the both of them from his ire. More importantly, it squashed the concern of force.

For whatever this was, it didn't seem bad for either of them.

Didn't mean it was good either.

They had bonded under stress. More importantly, the stress of Megatron coming to kill them. And that meant, in Ratchet's opinion it was not his Fragging job to deal with the emotional duress the two would likely go through when they met up with him.

What was his job though, was looking into modifying a new T-cog for the triple changer.

Payment. For Bumblebee's safety.

Blackaracnia's work on the mech was astounding if he had to be honest. Given what she started with, the femme was an absolute genius. But, the T-cog she had started with was Blitzwing's *original*. It was already a perfect fit for his frame and perfectly integrated.

Manufacturing one that would handle the overuse of Blitzwing's manic face changes would be a challenge on itself- not to mention the fact it needed three different configurations.

The problem was what had him still plugged into Blitzwing's medical port and passed out in a chair by his berth side.

His lined pinged at him, jolting him awake immediately. Ratchet's back protested at the sudden movement but the rest of his systems responded to the systems ping eagerly.

Who are you?

Medical Officer. Designation Ratchet.

A red optic and an illuminated zoom lens came to life in the dim of the medical bay's recharge cycle. There was a panic in the looming shadows Blitzwing's natural biolights provided. His face gave nothing away, but his onlining weapons systems did.

“ Where is he? ”

Ratchet didn't dignify the threat with a cower. He had woken up too many times still connected to violent mechs for it to really surprise him anymore. Instead, he powered up the datapad he had fallen asleep pouring over and huffed gruffly.

“Look down would you?”

Blitzwing's systems were still groggy; both from sleep and the energy spent dealing with his blown T-cog. It took him a few clicks and optic contact for him to actually register the small yellow frame pressed desperately into his good side. Bumblebee was still asleep thankfully; he didn't need *both* of them yelling at him this time of night.

Still, Blitzwing visibly relaxed.

To the mech's credit, he was more considerate and aware of the situation than Ratchet initially gave him credit for.

“Who knows?”

“Me. Any mech on the battlefield when you went down. Any medic that's seen you since. Ah, and apparently one of them thought it best to send a copy of our medical files to Megatron directly,” Ratchet tried to sound nonchalant about the fact, “Lucky for us, he's not expected on base until morning. Him and Optimus both.”

Blitzwing laid back and shut his optics and for a moment looked as if he was wincing from some unknown pain.

“Why can't I-- I *want to be angry*-- ”

“Sentinel,” Ratchet said as if it explained everything. He waved the datapad in his hand, “I've worked on worse T-cogs a fraction of your size. I'm pretty sure I can piece you back together.”

Blitzwing took a vent, unable to really express emotion past that. But at least he gazed down at the sleeping mech tucked tightly in the crook of his arm and faintly smiled. *Smiled* as if his broken T-cog had been pennies to pay to find Bumblebee functioning and uninjured and so close to him. It was faint, but a lot from the usually stoic mech.

“And what of the white Autobot?”

Autobot. Said as if it was a curse, and it may have well been one at this point. The reports of Vos' had shown as much. The execution line, Sentinel's *personal* vendetta; Jazz had been reporting to him since the had *arrived*.

It put them in an awkward position. Not Autobots; likely never again Autobots. But never Decepticons. But not neutrals, they had too many stakes in the war at this point.

What were they?

“Blurr omitted Jazz's betrayal from the report; smart kid. He and Prowl decided it best that it be dealt with *internally* when Optimus gets his aft back here.”

Blitzwing winced again, another failed attempt at switching his faceplates. His entire frame tightened despite the fact.

“When Optimus gives the word I *will* end him,” Blitzwing gritted his dentae, “He only needs to *point* .”

Ratchet wanted to protest with something akin to murder being Megatron's modus operandi but the observation caught in his throat.

What would Optimus do?

The question stayed unanswered. So he would have to settle for second best.

“Yeah well don't think you're out of the dog house just because you're up for some loyalty murder,” Ratchet shot back, “I'm sure once the kid comes back he'll have a whole lecture on consent or the dangers of bonding or some slag like that.”

With the urgency of finding his conjunx gone, Blitzwing's optics began to dim. Though he wasn't

quite asleep he was fading fast, no doubt his self-repair systems doing.

“Better than Megatron...”

“We’ll see about that.”

But the red glow of Blitzwing's optics had faded, back in stasis for the night. It was for the best. Tomorrow was a new morning and they all could use the rest.

They spoke of Crystal City and Iacon on their transport and with each word, each syllable Megatron could almost feel himself constricting his spark with whispered *no's*, and, *he's glitched* and *he's too small*. But his spark, the treacherous, treacherous thing simply sang over top of his objections.

Optimus would point to a barricade, the mumble of possible weakness and Megatron's spark would agree wholeheartedly. Not of war strategy, not at all; but instead tunes of cooperation.

He's brilliant. It sang, look at him. Strong, and determined. Look at how he ponders the lives at the tips of both of your fingertips. Look at how he saves them. Look at how he's always protecting them. Do you think he'd protect us like that?

No. He would hiss back, ***never. Not after those scars. Not after what I've done to him.***

And then Optimus would lean back, it's at the new weld on his side, not yet painted of course. No, the little mech wouldn't spare the time to have himself properly painted. Not with that team of his waiting so desperately for his return.

He would lean back, stretch and shit his plating and his spark would purr.

Touch him. Please. Again. Just once more. It begged, we've never met a mech worthy of us before. We won't lose him.

He's glitched. And not mine to lose. Megatron would respond, ***he only allowed me to touch him because he was injured. To do so again would be presumptuous and inappropriate.***

And then the light would go off behind Optimus' optics and he would surge forward once more with a counterpoint to Megatron's, often times a solution where more mechs got out of it alive; attacking critical but bases away from civilians, distracting high command while spec ops got information.

Prove yourself, it reasoned, why can't he see we could give so much to him. He must see how powerful we are. Why doesn't he want us?

Because I killed him.

And then the cycle would repeat itself and Megatron would once again come to the exact same conclusion; that he had ruined his chances before they even began.

All of this because Optimus let him help him all of the ways back to base in Rodion. All of this because he was allowed to put pressure on a wound while he carried him back to base and Optimus hadn't tried to kill him for it.

“Megatron?”

Oh please say my designation again.

“Yes? I think I just got wrapped up in the supply lines that need running before Crystal City. What was it?”

He couldn't read the mech's expression from behind his battle mask but he hoped he was smiling.

He needed to kick these thoughts. they were too *distracting*. And that said nothing of the ones that plagued him last night while Optimus was in for repairs.

The less... appropriate ones.

They were a shame he would never expose to Optimus. Not now knowing about those scars. Not ever.

“We’re here,” Optimus said, shutting down the holomap that had been working on.

Megatron stood and stretched himself, definitely not trying to show off. Definitely not.

“I will bring your proposals to Strika, I would like her input,”

Optimus sighed and ran a servo across his faceplates, “Just don’t tell her they were from me alright? She hates anything I put on the table.”

They both advanced to the lower section of the transport ship, heading toward the bay. By now Megatron could feel the decent of the ship.

“Would it help if I said she’s hardest on those she likes? Pit knows she’s taken me down a few pegs on occasion.”

“It would,” Optimus rolled his optics, “If I was still a cadet. Now, I only find it frustrating. Besides, it's not like taking you down a few pegs is that difficult.”

They approached the bay doors right as they touched down. The comment earned Optimus an amused chuff as Megatron's spark pointed out how comfortable the smaller of them seemed to be.

He suppressed the comment once again.

“You should say that in the sparring ring,” Megatron crossed his arms but held a smirk, “without those fancy gadgets of yours I doubt knocking me down a few pegs will be so easy.”

Optimus offered a spy side glare, “You talk a large game for a mech who *lost* our last fight. Name the time and I'll be happy to remind you exactly what happened.”

The bay doors opened as they bickered and as soon as they could Optimus was already striding down, a quick hop to his step. Megatron didn't blame him.

He was getting better at picking up when exactly something was wrong amongst Optimus’ crew. This time though, the issue seemed blatant. The only mechs in the landing docks there to greet them were Shockwave, Cyclonus, Brainstorm and the quick little blue one.

Blurr. Yes. That was his designation.

Optimus' pace quickened again as he approached them. From his place still on the decent ramp,

Megatron watched as Optimus turned between them before Blurr handed him a report.

It was clicks between him glancing over the reports and starting an almost jog into the base. He looked panicked. The rest followed him save for Shockwave.

Follow him. Something is wrong, his spark lurched.

No.

“Shockwave,” he found himself falling into his usual routine, “Report.”

He had never dealt with this before.

No. That was a lie. He had dealt with this with Starscream once and only once. After that he had removed the threat of being sold out at every twist and turn he could. And for three hundred years he had been successful. For three hundred years he had controlled the situation.

But *Jazz* of all mechs? ***Jazz?***

The notion was almost incomprehensible. Yet somehow everyone already had their own opinions on the situation already.

Bumblebee, Blitzwing and Cyclonus had expressed themselves securely in the execution camp with slight deviations on the method. Though those differences came down to blaster versus sword. Optimus had objected to the idea of stabbing him in the spark immediately. No one argued. Cyclonus was the only one to mention anything along the lines of interrogation beforehand.

Blurr had suggested a court-martial. Which, Optimus would have agreed with save for two problems. There was no way to collect an impartial judge for a decision. Nor did they actually have military law for their merry band and using the Autobot and Decepticon codes seemed out of the question for separate reasons.

Option three-- Ratchet's stance sat securely on abandonment. His reasoning being if they wouldn't take him the Decepticons wouldn't and Sentinel may have him killed if he tried the Autobot's. Either way, he wasn't their problem anymore. Simply leave him on the border and let him figure the rest out.

It wasn't long until the room fell into a disorganized argument, Jazz still stuck in the middle, vents quivering every so often. Optimus found himself watching him more than anyone else from his place sat on the berth. They had to have Blitzwing on a comm screen from the medical bay just to hold the meeting.

He closed the meeting not too long after, simply to let everyone out of the cramped berth room to vent. They all needed it desperately at that point. Cyclonus and Bumblebee were put on watch to give the other two a break as they dispersed.

Optimus made an attempt to get to the mess hall for some fuel before he was stopped in the corridor by Prowl.

The mech looked tired enough it gave Optimus pause to listen.

“You forgave me,” Prowl had whispered to him, “I left you on earth and you forgave me. And I

know this is different. I didn't hold you down and help Sentinel kill everyone. And as much as I hate to do this, we need Jazz. We need to make this work. Trust me. Please, this once.”

Optimus thanked him for his input and continued down to grab fuel. He desperately needed it with his side still so freshly welded.

What he really wanted was a large swig of high grade and someone to knock him out for a shift, but that looked less and less likely with the oncoming slag storm of issues.

He fuelled alone, caught up on his thoughts and reread Blurr's new report.

At least he could be thankful none of the Decepticons knew. A fracture could be a sign of weakness; something for Megatron to exploit if given the chance. Small mercies he supposed.

He attempted to think through his options for a solution. Somewhere amongst the anger, there must be something he could do; they were relying on him to find it. He didn't have a choice.

What he desperately needed was a guiding hand. In the past, he may have asked Ultra Magnus or his technician supervisor if the insubordination had gotten past his disciplinary abilities. What he needed was someone with experience in these situations; someone who had been in a leadership position before.

Someone like Megatron.

But it wasn't as if he could actually ask Megatron for help anyways. So once again he was on his own. Joking around with the warlord was one thing, asking him for military advice was another.

On his own with the fate of a mech in his hands.

“Did that energon offend you?”

Optimus knew that voice anywhere and soon enough Megatron was sitting down on the bench seat across from him, his own ration in hand.

Great. Just who he needed to see right now.

“What?”

“The glass,” Megatron motioned to it in his servo, “you’re cracking it?”

Optimus yanked his hand away from the cube as if it had burned it. With his hand now out of the way, he could see the spider web of cracks down the one side.

“Did you need something Megatron?” He found himself unable to be polite.

Megatron hummed, but pulled a datapad out from his subspace and tapped it down on The table. Optimus hesitated-- not quite ready to attack another problem but not ready either to come off as indisposed. So, with a swift hand, he took the datapad and flipped through the files.

“Numbers,” Optimus observed, “From Vos. More specifically, *Autobot* numbers.”

Megatron hummed, taking a swig of his energon before taking a vent and chugging the entire thing in one go. He focused on the datapad then, looking over Optimus with a concerned look.

“Exactly why I've been looking for you. Shockwave handed me the reports from the incoming seekers from Vos,” Megatron leaned forward as if discussing some sort of conspiracy theory,

“What no one can figure out, Strika nor I, is where the reinforcements can from. There are numbers here that arrived shortly before Starscream's assault that we just can't explain.”

Optimus swallowed hard, emotion welling in the pit of his Spark's housing.

“Megatron,” He could feel his vocalizer crack, “Can this wait until the meeting this evening? Please.”

He reached once more for his cube, hoping the fuel would calm him.

“Now Optimus,” the warlord before him let out a rumble of his engines, “I’ve allowed you to prance around with your mech's and say your welcomes but you shouldn't forget we’re in the middle of a war here. Whatever was wrong I'm sure you've dealt with. Now what I need you to do is ask those Ellie guard dropouts of yours what the deal was. The blue one or the black one or the white one--”

CRACK!

Megatron stood first, avoiding most of the splash of energon from the glass exploding between Optimus's fingers. The energon slid between his fingers and down the table, leaking between them in a viscous puddle.

For a moment they stared at each other. Optimus almost shrunk in on himself for the embarrassment.

Still. He would need to explain himself, need to debase himself, *need to expose himself*.

It was obvious he couldn't do this alone. It was impossible; he had no idea how to proceed.

“The meeting room,” Optimus found himself saying, “I want to talk in private.”

Optimus called them back an hour later. Now with a clear direction, settling everyone down became much easier; much less stressful. The anticipation was tangible in the room as they filed in mumbling to one another.

Jazz still sat on the floor in from of him, Stasis cuffs behind his back and head hung low.

Ratchet was the last to enter and with him a silence that strangled them all. Between them all, hunger in their optics burrowed into Jazz with intent to destroy that Optimus hadn't seen before.

It made him want to get this over with as soon as possible.

“Jazz,” he mustered an authority to his vocalizer, “I want to hear what you have to say.”

Someone, Optimus didn't know who, scoffed.

Jazz shifted but raised his helm and let out a shaky vent.

“I am sorry, and I feel bad for what happened to Minimus and Bulkhead. They didn’t deserve that-- they didn’t deserve anything without proper process,” Jazz dipped his head back down as if to hide, “But I can’t agree with what ya’ve done either. Not all of it at least.”

Optimus nodded, internalized and discarded the implications; something he was doing a lot of now.

“For now Jazz, I’ve arranged some time for you in the Brig--”

A collage of ‘what’ fell over the room.

“Enough!” Optimus snapped, “Jazz’s actions didn’t just affect us! And though what happens to him next is my decision, I’d like to take the group’s opinion into account--”

“Like frag you have!” Brainstorm piped up.

Optimus shot him a glare, and once again the room fell into relative silence.

“One of the stipulations on using keeping him there was full access for Megatron to hold *interrogations* as he sees fit. As long as one of us is present at that time as well.”

That seemed to placate the room, save for Jazz’s panicked expression.

A murmur, mostly agreement, then-

“I’ll do it,” Prowl piped up, “I’ll get in contact with Vortex and the two of us will handle it.”

Meeting adjourned.

Chapter End Notes

NEXT TIME

... I’m not sure. Expect delays on the next chapter. There’s uh... well. a gap in my plot graph riiiiiiight here and now I’ve gotta go back to planning. Sorry!

Thank you, everyone, for the support!

FINAL ARC - We Are Made of the Same Material

Chapter Summary

It's okay cuz we're at the road again.

Chapter Notes

I don't want to look at this anymore

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The clattering sounded louder than it should have in the quiet of the night shift. It drew Megatron's attention up from his console with an annoyed confusion. His optics were glazed with exhaustion and it was apparent his processor took a moment to register exactly what was occurring. The feeling was mutual; they had been working double shifts the last week; it was the only reason was broaching the subject now when the majority of the day's issues had been solved. They had probably hours before another slew of issues came up, so Optimus had little time to solve what was brewing underneath him.

Optimus motioned to the datapads, "I need to know where to file these."

Megatron, in his exhausted stupor, did nothing but offer a confused ridge lift directly at his smaller counterpart. The question was implicit.

Optimus let out a frustrated sigh-- the work cycle must have been wearing on him as well. He motioned to the first data pad "Formal complaints from Blurr, and Ratchet about Shockwave and Deadlock getting a little too close to comfort respectively-" He motioned to the second, "One from Prowl. He and Vortex have yet to actually agree on any sort of interrogation method regarding Jazz-"

Megatron pinched his nasal ridge, "Who's that one again?"

"The white one."

Megatron leaned over his desk, seemingly more distressed than when he had started, "Your little traitor. Yes. Tarn handles disciplinary issues. Hand it off to Nickel and she'll deal with it. Continue."

Optimus motioned to the next, "A request from Brainstorm for a private lab; he keeps complaining his supervisor rejects his proposals."

Megatron scoffed. Optimus could agree with the sentiment. They were trying to break through Crystal City's defensive line and the last thing they needed was an explosion on board. Optimus picked the report back up, tucking it back into his subspace and considering it already rejected.

"Point taken," Optimus continued, "Ratchet's request to reserve a surgery room to replace

Blitzwing's T-cog."

"Hook is the acting chief of medical staff," Megatron dismissed, "You know him. Give it to him. Are we almost done? I'd like to recharge within the next solar cycle."

Optimus rolled his shoulders, trying to brush away the dismissive tone. He forced himself to continue through the discomfort, "Two more. I promise. Bumblebee wants-" Optimus took a vent, "Bumblebee wants Blitzwing and his' bond formally recognized."

Another scoff, this time more of a nasally snort, "When they have a proper ceremony, I will consider it. Until then they're no more Conjunx then Starscream and I."

This was going to be a long conversation, Optimus could already tell. He grabbed a chair and pulled it over to Megatron's console. He sat on it backwards, legs spread over the sides. He leaned forward.

"I don't agree with it any more than you do-" Optimus lifted the datapad, "-But they are bonded. Ratchet checked and it should be put on the books, especially if Blitzwing is going into a dangerous surgery."

Megatron grabbed the datapad from him, actually turning the thing on and looking it over. He glared at it for a moment and then let out another snooty blast of his vents. "Oh, they merged sparks alright. I won't argue with that. But they aren't Conjunx. Not until they hold proper rites and they have a ranked officer or Amica officiate. And Blitzwing doesn't have an Amica, nor is anyone else in a position to officiate other than me."

"So what," Optimus asked, "They aren't official until you say so?"

Megatron nodded, "And I'm not going to say so."

Optimus would usually agree. He had left the two alone pending Blitzwing's recovery; Bumblebee had all but begged him to when he finally admitted to the affairs. He still intended to have a private conversation with the Warframe but it would wait until the two were in good health and could handle the strain.

To say Bumblebee was an emotional wreck at the moment would be an understatement.

He couldn't agree with Megatron though. Even if Blitzwing had somehow coerced Bumblebee into the bond, which in Optimus' opinion was looking less and less likely, they still needed formal acknowledgement.

"If Ratchet's in surgery with Blitzwing, then Bumblebee has every right to be waiting in recovery for him," Optimus explained, "But according to your regulations he's not even allowed in the medical bay without a proper bond." Which was a half-truth. Optimus suspected it was just the excuse the medical staff was using to get the talkative mech out of the med bay. If it wasn't for Ratchet he was sure Bumblebee would be barred from seeing Blitzwing completely.

Megatron visibly bristled. For a moment it seemed like he was actually considering the problem. But then he said, "Did you consider perhaps we should separate them?"

Optimus sat up, "For bumblebee's safety?"

Megatron again looked thoughtful; as if there was a problem before him he couldn't quite solve at a first glance. Then, he struggled with the explanation, "No. I mean perhaps they aren't *compatible*."

It took a click for Optimus to catch on to what exactly Megatron was trying to avoid.

“You mean you think Bumblebee isn’t good enough for Blitzwing,” he crossed his arms.

Megatron stayed silent.

Optimus was all but willing to start an argument over the entire situation. Given, he had been tentatively against the two for some time now, only permitting visitations on Ratchet’s grounds of the stress it would put the two in. Still, that had only been due to concern over a forced bond; an idea that had been becoming less and less likely overall. It was not a question of *Compatibility* as Megatron had so eloquently put it.

“If Bumblebee’s spark isn’t monitored, I will personally tell Brainstorm to steal whatever materials he needs and build whatever he wants,” Optimus countered.

Megatron took a deep vent but relented, “Fine. I’ll put in the order to have him monitored. But no formal acknowledgement.”

“Agreed.”

Megatron picked up the last datapad, “and this one?”

Optimus took a vent and fumbled with some unnoticeable smudge on the table and then, “That one is mine.”

Megatron shuddered his optics for a click. He pinched his nasal ridge, forcing his face into an uncomfortable grimace. His vocalizer spat exhausted static, “And what, by chance, do you have an issue with?”

“We had a deal Megatron. Rodion for Iacon. But somehow I’ve ended up helping you with crystal city as well,” Optimus tried to rationalize.

Megatron’s natural resting scowl deepened. He took a long exasperated vent that Optimus would swear brought the temperature around them up a degree. It weighed down on them enough Optimus let his shoulders slump, losing a tad of his nerve.

“We’re in the middle of a war zone. How, exactly, do you expect me to get my army across the Autobot line? Past what we’ve already been attempting. Please. Enlighten me.”

“If we could just get a few of us across-”

Megatron rolled his optics and let out an annoyed huff. Optimus felt the familiar crawl of a conflict crawl up his spinal strut.

“You want me to trust you and that merry band of rascals alone again? Even if I did, what exactly stops the Autobot from picking you off?” Megatron raised his optical ridge in smug question.

As if Optimus hadn’t already thought that trough.

“That Sumdac’s microchip, the one you gave Blackarachnia. You and I both know it would hide us long enough for the trip to Iacon,” Optimus countered with a glare of his own.

“My answer was no Optimus.”

Optimus stood, intentionally setting his field alight. If Megatron felt it, he said nothing and just stared the mech down. “I wasn’t asking permission Megatron. You either hold up your side of the

bargain or I'm leaving.”

“Are you?” Megatron countered, “Because if I remember correctly you're using both my medical bay and my brig. And where exactly, does this little plan of yours cover your injured and imprisoned?”

Optimus let his optics hit the floor, “If I'm so much of a bother, why even spare me in the first place, *My Lord?* ”

Megatron didn't budge.

Optimus grit his dentae, this wasn't going anywhere. Looks like he was going to have to turn towards plan B after all.

“Look those over, please. If you need me, I'm going to take the next half shift to recharge. I'll see you in the morning shift.”

Jazz heard rumours; bits and pieces of a whole story that never quite fit together correctly. He heard that Blitzwing was still alive, that they were safe and the Optimus had wiggled his way into high command somehow. He personally heard Prowl's voice as well a couple of times, but it was always arguing with another mech, and too far off to be useful.

It wasn't as if any of them would *help* him. But if he was going to make an escape he needed all the help he could get.

The guards came by once an hour; plenty of time to tamper with the locks and get himself out. After that, it was just a brief jog between here and the docking bay. If he didn't get caught, that was. If he was caught, he was fragged. Plain and simple. Optimus wouldn't be so merciful a second time. Sentinel hadn't been.

No. When Jazz failed, Sentinel Prime had left him.

The image of Sentinel, staring down at him with wide optics was burned into his processor. The silence, the smell, the debris of Vos' were burned into his minds optic, along with the overwhelming fear. Deafened and scared of a purple seeker coming to take him away too, he reached for his Prime, *hoping. Praying.*

And Sentinel had turned. Turned and left. And then purple claws had wrapped around him and pulled him into a medical bay far from the field.

And now he was in the belly of the beast. With one chance to get out.

He decided. After the next time they gave him fuel, he'd bust the lock and make for an exit. He'd pull himself across the crystal city line, and hunker down with the rest of the elite guard. And if he was especially lucky, Sentinel would have been sent back to Iacon and not the front lines.

Jazz knew he wasn't much of a lucky mech at the moment. But he could try.

He couldn't stay here. Not with the things he could hear Prowl and his partner discussing. He'd just have to wait a bit longer.

Which would be easier if not for his occasional visitor.

“So Optimus tells us to file formal reports! Formal reports! As if big boss Megatron is going to do slag about his chief intelligence officer or some slugging assassin. Yeah right! At least Ratchet and I are in the same boat here. Ya know?”

Blurr came by more often than he probably should. He never gave anything away, likely under some sort of gag order but that didn't stop him from babbling.

“Except at least Ratchet can hide in the medical bay. Did I say Shockwave cornered me in the mess hall the other day?”

Jazz didn't answer as usual.

“Oh, well. I'm trying to refuel with Prowl, normal right? But Optimus and Ratchet are dealing with the Blitzwing situation so it's just the two of us--”

It felt so *so* much like old times; just sitting around the lunch table gossiping. It made him think of Cliffjumper. And Prowl. It made his spark heavy. He didn't understand how Blurr could *stand it*.

“--Shockwave thinks this a good time to try and talk to me again, which it isn't. It won't ever be. You know he used to frag me over his desk. Told me some slag about liking to be able to feel my engine vibrate or some slag, but now I'm just convinced he did it so I wouldn't see the colour of his spike--”

On cue, the Decepticon guard rounded the corner. He didn't acknowledge him or Blurr, simply walking past as if Blurr's presence and babbling was normal, which it was at this point. But Blurr's optics followed the guard with a trained optic. It was if he was making a mental note of something.

Something in Jazz clicked.

The guard turned around the corner.

“-- And he has a mouth,” Blurr continued without missing a beat, “I can prove it.”

“He's planning something again,” Strika said as they walked along the hanger.

Megatron grumbled in response, too preoccupied with running the numbers for their next wave of attack. He glanced back up at the ship in repairs. “They just keep sending them back at us...”

“Did you hear me?” Strika snapped, “I said, He's planning something again.”

Megatron looked over at his second, raised an optical ridge and waved off the engineer that had been assisting them. “Pardon?”

“Optimus. You know he's planning something again. And If I can speak frankly you need to do something about it before we lose a quarter of our forces again.”

“I've told you all once and I'll deal with him personally,” Megatron gave Strika a sidelong glare.

The last thing he needed was a lack of confidence around his inner circle. Not with the attack on Crystal City going so poorly. It didn't help that Optimus had refused to move past desk work; the mech could really do some damage when motivated. And he hadn't been motivated properly since the run-in with Ultra Magnus. Megatron chose not to chase after him about it. But did that mean the ex-Autobot was planning something again? Certainly not.

“You know he’s been speaking to Blackarachnia And Cyclonus on a more steady basis. You’ve made yourself a new Starscream-- a worse Starscream. Optimus’ goals don’t revolve around you.”

Megatron snorted, “He is nothing like Starscream--”

Strika moved in front of him then, blocking his view from anything else. Her field radiated a genuine mix of concern/anger. Her expression read dangerously; almost as if she was trying to warn him.

He realized *she was*.

Megatron gave her his attention. “Optimus isn’t Starscream,” He repeated.

She huffed, letting out a puff of hot air in a scoff.

“He’s worse. At least with Starscream, you knew he was aiming for you--” she shoo-ed off another engineer, “- With your little Autobot pet I have no idea what he’s attempting to accomplish.”

Megatron glared at her.

Strika rolled her optics.

“He’s still small like an Autobot, I’ll call him an Autobot. You know he’s got his little Blue speedster watching guard patrols right?”

Megatron hissed, “Iacon. He wants to get to Iacon. But I know he is becoming impatient. I am working on it. I assure you.”

“And don’t you think it’s odd that his ninja bot keeps stopping Vortex from even entering the traitor’s cell?”

He did, obviously. But between Crystal city, Optimus filing multiple reports to multiple departments and everything else going on he hadn’t had the time to address it.

But it seemed like he’d have to make the time now. If Strika’s concern was any indicator of the severity of the situation.

“You’ve invited a spark eater into our ranks, just like Megazarak did with--”

“Do not compare me to that traitor--”

“Enough. This has gone far enough, and you know it. If you don’t fix this now, you know I’m not the only one who’s going to start becoming an issue,” Strika finally finished.

Megatron sighed, and motioned for her to follow him out of the bay but stopped immediately as he turned towards the exit.

Brainstorm stood behind them awkwardly holding some tool and staring at them both. He blinked dumbly for a moment as if being caught doing something he shouldn’t. The idea that they both had missed a mech eavesdropping on them was concerning, even more so it being one of Optimus’.

Brainstorm seemed to understand the weight of his stalling, bumble slightly before finally holding up the tool.

“I uh, this was for--”

Megatron raised a servo, stopping the mech. "Report to the Forman. I don't have time."

He waved for Strika to follow and passed Brainstorm.

This couldn't end well.

They were alone on the command deck, something that happened more often than not now. It was a perfect chance for Megatron to make his move.

So he stood as soon as he mustered the drive to and quieted his spark. He approached, slowly, with intent to the console Optimus is working on. He made his intentions known, intentionally not trying to startle the mech.

In turn, Optimus turned to him before he could completely reach him, stopping him in his tracks.

"Do you need something, Megatron?"

To Megatron's credit, he didn't falter when his faction was at risk. He spoke evenly, "I'll be forward Optimus, Strika has brought up some well-founded concerns. She seems to think you're hiding something again."

Optimus looked down, an open admission of guilt. There was an awkwardness to his field that usually wouldn't take center field. It was oddly open for the mech and it immediately raised red flags. The mech barely tilted his helm up, letting his optics peek out over the lip of his helm. He looked, dare he think it, sheepish.

"I'm sorry," He admitted, "I didn't mean to cause you trouble."

He fought down the urge to try and reassure the mech, and instead focussed on attempting to figure out exactly was going on here.

Optimus balled his servos into fists onto his lap, actually turning his chair to face Megatron. He still didn't quite look up, instead opting to hold himself small and awkward. It didn't suit him. It lacked the dignity Optimus usually carried with himself.

"What is it you're getting up to?" He mused both to himself and the mech in question.

It was only then when poised with a question that Optimus reacted. He stood, Stepping closer to Megatron but keeping their optic line indirect. But he took another step, closing the gap between them and intentionally coming into Megatron's personal space. It was a bold move, but Megatron didn't pull away.

"I'll admit, I haven't been completely innocent lately," Optimus dropped his voice to a whisper, forcing the warlord to tune his audials to be a bit more sensitive, "You can't blame me though, I have to keep everyone safe. But doing that, I fear I've exposed myself."

Ah, so he was simply watching out for others.

"You know if there's an issue you can come to me-" He resisted the urge to bring Optimus' face up to his own "-If it means that much to you, I will take a look into Blitzwing's situation."

Optimus Looked up at him finally, optics wide and scanning, for what? Megatron couldn't tell. But it was another openness that strikes him as a warning sign. It forced him out of the situation and

didn't let him fall completely into the situation. No matter how the lights of the consoles reflected against the small mech's plating in the dim night shift light.

"I couldn't. Despite what I usually come out with, I can't deny what you've done for us. For me. Pit, you carried me all the way back to our defensive line in Rodion. I never thanked you for that, nor for the return of Ratchet."

Optimus moved then, unexpectedly closer to his counterpart. He reached slowly, bringing his helm back down to watch his own servo reach up to briefly brush against Megatron. It should mean nothing; a small and casual touch. But it was more than that.

"Optimus--"

"Megatron," Optimus accentuated his name with a purr from his engine.

There was a beat; a vent; a pause. But nothing more.

Not until an audible *snick* of Optimus battle mask pulling back.

"Really Megatron, I'm grateful." He punctuated his proclamation with a tug on his larger counterparts arm. It was insistent enough that Megatron leaned down, putting their faceplates so close. Still, Optimus looked bashful and almost ashamed of himself as he asked softly, "Let me thank you? The Autobot way?"

Whatever Megatron was so determined about earlier melted away. By the intimate touches, he had a general idea what 'The Autobot way' meant. He had no objections.

Or he didn't until Optimus lips met his own. The mech was almost too forceful against him. His movements were almost rehearsed the way they fell into a pattern of a nip then a lick then a brush. A nip, a lick, then a brush... a nip, a lick, then a brush. It was practiced; a movement meant to please rather than naturally flow. Optimus had done this before.

It was nowhere near the magical moment he had expected.

It was Megatron that broke the kiss, despite his reluctance to. It didn't feel right. Optimus didn't feel right.

He supposed that was partially his own fault. He had the image, in his processor. It would be out on the battlefield, Optimus would turn to him in a graceful dismount of some unfortunate spark who dared cross their path. Optimus would turn, run to him in the heat of the moment. Their meeting would be forceful, full of a warrior's passion and perfection.

It would not be a practiced and shy show of gratitude.

Optimus was trying to use him.

It hurt more than it should, logically speaking. It wasn't the first time Optimus had tried to use his faction for his own gain. But this was different. This was using his own emotions against him. And so so soon since Rodion and how they had fought together.

"...Megatron?"

"What are you hiding?"

Optimus' expression immediately fell back into its usual determined and contemplative scowl.

Megatron found himself more comfortable with that look than shy and submissive. It was more... Optimus.

"I am not hiding anything," Optimus took a step back, a pink flush over his faceplates. Bingo.

Megatron scoffed, a small ire beginning in his chest, "And you shouldn't try and manipulate the master, little mech."

Optimus' optics shot open before he blabbered, "I am not little! And I'm not hiding anything!"

"Then care to explain why you're hanging around several of my officers? Or that little blue one hanging around the brig? Or the way Prowl is still preventing any sort of interrogation? Or Blitzwing's accelerated treatment? Or why you were attempting to get beneath my panels despite your obvious aversion to my affection?"

"I--"

The ire picked up into a small boil, "You attempted to use me. Strika was right, you are worse than Starscream."

Optimus' surprised and indignant expression fell immediately leaving nothing but an angry scowl remained. It served the small mech right, attempting to use him like that. The anger picked up once more, burning a determined path in his processor.

"Do not compare me to Starscream," Optimus hissed.

Optimus' anger only fueled his own, and soon enough their field battled rather than melded. It was good they were alone, it wouldn't do well for anyone other than the mech on security detail to see them go head to head once again.

"Why? Your scheming little processor is exactly like his! Except there are mechs that are loyal to you! You even tossed him in the line of fire as he did to you in one of those fragging loops!"

Optimus' energon flush was back but this time it wasn't in embarrassment. His plating flared with a sudden snap, flaring so suddenly it was audible. His battle mask shut immediately and all that was left viable was the glare of his optics.

"Do not compare me to Starscream, and do not implicate what he and I did were the same thing. He knew what he was doing when he sent me up to you. He knew you would rip me apart for what I've done--" His vents gave an odd wheeze, and he poked a finger against Megatron's plating, "-- You knew! You knew what Tarn would do to me when you sent him after me! You knew I would come out of it broken and beaten and, and, and--" He quieted some, but only marginally, "-- I am not like Starscream. I didn't send mechs to their death. Not intentionally. I am not like you either."

Megatron quieted himself.

Optimus stilled, a recognizable realization washed over his field and his plating snapped shut with the same force it had been opened with. But, to the smaller mech's credit, he didn't back down.

"You wonder why I'm hiding everything, why there is no reason in the pit I would ever put my life in your servos? Because I have, and you should know this. You have the records Megatron. I'm not going to tell you what's going on. If you want to kill me for that, It's not like you haven't before."

It wasn't fair.

It truly wasn't.

It was a revelation that hit him hard, one that drew an actual shiver out of the stern mech. He was paying for crimes he didn't even commit. It was unfair, he didn't actually kill the mech; he didn't actually send Tarn after him; he didn't actually do *anything*.

"You can't blame me for any of that," he found himself hissing, "I didn't do any of it!"

The force of the words pushes Optimus back as if they physically hit him. He stilled and looked away. It's obvious the prospect has crossed his processor before. It forces him to withdraw in on himself and still. He can see the mech pull in and build a wall around whatever he can internally. He could see him trying to defend himself emotionally.

"Just because you didn't do it, doesn't mean it didn't happen. It doesn't... it didn't just erase when it reset."

Megatron's spark felt like it tightened and shrunk.

Optimus pushed past him when Megatron offered no answer. His form was warm as they touched in brief. It was forceful and emotionally fuelled. But, he didn't stop him as he left the command deck. He listened to the pede steps walk away. But he stopped.

"We can't keep fighting each other like this."

Megatron turned towards him, "No. We can't."

Optimus looked down, glancing longingly at the door and then back to Megatron. "After our next advance into Crystal City. We should talk."

Megatron nodded.

Optimus left.

Cyclonus handed him the package, "Blackarachnia sends her regards."

Optimus took the package with a reverence. Last night cycle had been too close. It was any wonder that he wasn't being hauled down to the brig this very moment. It wouldn't matter after today he supposed, but that was beside the point.

"There's one in here for you as well Cyclonus," Optimus passed the box to Ratchet, who subspaced it immediately, "I know you'll be with Strika but if you find us, the chip takes no time to install."

"I would be honoured to join you Optimus."

The exchange was quick, nothing more than a conversation in passing. They had little more than that as they walked through the dropship. It wouldn't look like much to the mechs around them as they brushed and clashed with each other in the pre-fight chaos. At least they hadn't put him in the pity party of a ground team again.

They moved as a group. Ratchet stayed closest by his side, but the rest followed behind him closely. A newly repaired Blitzwing approached on his left side, Bumblebee perched precariously on his shoulder. "Brainstorm has been put under surveillance. I will deal with his detail when we

move.”

Bumblebee gave a cheery thumbs up from Blitzwing's shoulder.

It was still so odd seeing the two of them together.

“Like frag you will,” Ratchet interjected, “Your T-cog still needs time to settle. I told you a thousand times and I'll tell you again; you two stay out of the line of fire.”

“Prowl,” Optimus offered.

Prowl jogged up, “Yes?”

“Do you think you can handle Brainstorm's security?”

“If Brainstorm is armed, I'm sure the two of us can handle it, Optimus.”

“Good. Blitzwing and Bumblebee will fly ahead and scout out our best route then. Stay in the air, do not engage anyone.”

He could see Megatron now. He stood like a beacon among his men; bright, guiding and powerful. He was ordering groups around with no effort, guiding their strategy into a physical form.

They didn't have long now before they would have to drop onto the enemy line. And it would be long past that they were on the other side of the Autobot line and away from this whole mess.

That talk with Megatron wouldn't happen after all.

He bowed his helm slightly in greeting as they approached, “You requested me personally Lord Megatron?”

The warlord looked over everyone with a critical optic. He could see the gears start turning in his helm, “What are you-”

Optimus raised a hand, “Blurr is staying behind to monitor intelligence with Shockwave. Everyone else is just a little cooped up is all. We aren't going anywhere Megatron.”

The was Megatron eyes him, they both knew that was at least partially a lie.

“Had you told me you were bringing everyone in your merry band, I would have made better arrangements.”

“Seperate us, you mean,” Optimus crossed his arms, “I didn't tell you on purpose.”

Megatron let out a strangled vent before Rolling his optics, “Fine. All of you can come with me. We're heading the second wave; as previously discussed.”

Right where Optimus had planned during the last strategy meeting; right in the correct position to break through a cleaver hole in Megatron's offensive line and where most likely there would be a similar hole in the Autobot one. Sometimes his academy days came in handy, if only sometimes.

“Lead the way,” Ratchet humphed from behind him, “Ain't got time to waste now do we?”

They moved as a mass towards their designated doors. They were only clicks off now, far too soon for Megatron to do anything.

As long as Megatron hadn't done anything last night cycle. Which Optimus hoped was unlikely.

They moved together towards the front of the ship, up past the prepared squads until they reached what looked to be the group they would drop with, Lugnut being the most recognizable among them. The mechs were as intimidating as one may expect for high command, but it occurred to Optimus this may be another intimidation tactic, so he didn't acknowledge it.

It was clicks later they dropped, Megatron at their head. They burst onto the battlefield as a wave; air support at their backs.

Optimus had never been to Crystal City. In fact, he'd seen more of Cybertron these past few months than he ever had actually living there. Being an officer model that had chosen a military route after his final upgrades, Optimus has been confined to Metroplex and off-world military bases. They had only made it this far due to Starscream and the seekers hitting them so hard from the West.

As southern cities that had been ravaged by war and then mostly abandoned, Kaon and Rodion paled in comparison. Unlike both cities, Crystal City was better maintained, the scars on the city were new, caused in the month they had been fighting here. Blatant signs of last-minute evacuations littered the battlefield of ruined buildings. It was all so fresh, like new wounds in a new place.

A direct line through the city would take an hour to pass through, factor in battle avoidance, Optimus sent out a meeting time over the communication channel. Everyone pinged back an agreement.

They hit Autobot forces almost immediately. Being only a days drive from Metroplex proper, forces here we're heavier. Crystal City's defensive line had slowed them enough to get reinforcements back from the outer edges as well. It would be soon impenetrable if they delayed any longer.

The Decepticons pushed forward full force.

He let the team fan out, keeping their signatures in his peripherals as he took to Megatron's side. Together, they hit their first targets like a wrecking ball.

Sometimes it amazed him how they could fight so well together given their usual fight against one another. Megatron would go high, aiming for any artillery while Optimus went low, going to take down the mechs firing at them. They worked in tandem; It was rhythmic, balanced, truly powerful.

He just had to fight long enough to get confirmation from both Blurr and Prowl that everything was good to go. It would help as well if he could get a report from Blitzwing, but he focused more on the fight ahead. They had to stick to the plan.

Too bad his plans never worked a hundred percent.

Megatron had blasted a good hole in front of them, Optimus took it as an opportunity to gain a few more feet of well-needed advancement.

He didn't feel the vibrations at first, too focused on the battle to realize anything was amiss. Between keeping the battle and his plan running in his processor narrowed his attention almost too much, to the point he almost turned on Megatron wrapped his arm around his waist.

Megatron hushed him, the battle around them slowly stilling; and then Optimus felt it.

A tremor, much more pronounced now. The entire battlefield was moving.

Optimus immediately ran several calculations through his processor, they were too far back, they were too far back for the protocol-

And then a giant helm crested the horizon of crystal city.

Optimus's reaction was immediate, pulling out of Megatron's grip and barking into his communications array, "Blur, get Jazz off the Nemesis now. Prowl; Brainstorm. Everyone gets moving now, and we all get across."

Optimus turned, only to meet Megatron's chest with a hard bump. The warlord looked down at him, an accusatory glare gracing his faceplates, "What have you done?!"

"Nothing!" Optimus yelled over the now growing rumble, "This wasn't me!"

"Then what is it?!"

"The Metroplex Protocol."

The rumbling grew further, the Autobots around them starting to panic as well. The silhouette of a massive helm and shoulders was more vivid over the horizon now. The mechs around them descended into a panicked mass. Mechs knocked into them both as they ran, Autobots and Decepticons alike. Above them, only a single seeker still progressed forward. With any luck that would be Blitzing, but Optimus knew better than to assume.

He couldn't waste more time, they needed to move if they wanted to make it past the titan, they had to move now, and get past it before MetroTitan could make getting over the enemy line any more difficult. He turned towards the Titan and pushed forward, past the fleeing Autobots and away from Megatron. Or he tried to, but Megatron's angry field seemed to follow him and he transformed and drove forward.

MetroTitan wasn't exactly hard to avoid. But that didn't mean the Autobot defences were. The narrow opening he had planned for himself was closing now. With the addition to their forces, he had to move quickly.

He drove up on the line faster than he had anticipated. With the cleared panic of the enemies, it was significantly easier to spot the gap in defensive ships. It was closing fast; both ships shot a cover of fire, and Optimus knew he'd have to take a hit to get through.

He was halfway under the ship when that blast hit him, slowing enough for a second. But he continued forward into the Autobot defences.

And then, something exploded.

Megatron pulled himself from the rubble with all the grace he could muster.

Megatron watched in horror from the *wrong* side of Crystal City. His troops, *his faction*, was so far, so desperately far and impossible to get to now. Not even he, the slag maker himself was prepared to fight against a metro Titan. Not alone.

At his back, Optimus rose, more rubble falling from his plating.

And he wasn't the only one.

He turned, watching the blue and red mech scan over their small team, taking a mental note of who exactly had made it, and in what shape. For the first time since earth, Megatron actually had an urge to strangle the mech.

Optimus just walked away though, not even acknowledging what had happened.

“Iacon is still a four-day drive,” He announced, “We should move.”

“Move?!” Megatron stepped to follow him, fists clenched at his side and fusion cannon warming on instinct, “You want to just leave?! Everything?! What happened to our plans to take the city?! What happened to work together?!”

Optimus kept walking.

The others were slow to gather themselves. It wasn't long though, until Brainstorm had joined him, along with their medic, Prowl and Jazz.

Blurr stopped for a moment and stuck his tongue out towards the battle, “And good riddance you one opticed freak!”

“You can say that again,” Ratchet chimed in and soon enough the entire group was moving across the energon field.

They were *ignoring* him.

“You can’t just leave!” His arm lifted itself, actually aiming the fusion cannon at their backs as they wandered away from the light of the battle.

An arm came down on his own, gently pushing downward. At his left, Blitzwing stood firm, hand on him as a threat. The yellow one peeked up from his back.

“You’ve separated me from what’s *mine*, ” he hissed, “What used to be *yours*. ”

It didn't phase Blitzwing. Instead, he shrugged.

“Jou weren’t supposed to follow us.”

Megatron lowered his cannon.

Chapter End Notes

Next Time

Megatron really realizes some shit

Issues start and things finally start clicking into place

One Last Plan

Chapter Summary

The journey to Iacon

Chapter Notes

It feels actually so so weird to almost be done this. Huh, \

Thank you, everyone, for the comments and support!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“You have to tell them,”

“No. I do not.”

“Yes. Yes, you do.”

Blitzwing let out another annoyed vent of air. Air, bumblebee was sure was several degrees too warm. In fact, the entire triple changer felt way too warm; warm enough that Bee could feel the difference with his servo alone. It didn't help they continued flying well past crystal city. At least they hadn't hit any sort of patrols yet, though that couldn't last forever.

Besides, if Blitzwing overheated the microchips that Blackarachnia had made them would melt--effectively exposing their position.

“It's fine,” Blitzwing grumbled.

“If you're not going to tell Ratchet I will,” Bumblebee argued.

Their bond pulsed with a reluctant acceptance. But at least Blitzwing agreed to some form of medical attention. They'd have to wait until they took a break for the day, which was starting to look a lot more likely.

Hadeen crested what was left of the horizon to the right of them. The first few brushes of light started to warm the side of Bumblebee not in contact with the overheating triple changer. He could almost feel the way it sapped the thickness from the air. Already he could feel how it started to thin around their flight path, making vents significantly easier.

At first, it Bumblebee how far exactly that thick heavy air could stray from its origin at the battlefield. He was starting to become accustomed to the presence of it; how it clung to his plating well after a battle, how it soured the area around it. It had travelled further than usual, but that was before they had reached the gaping wound of the planet that used to be Metroplex's resting place.

Optimus waved them down and it soon enough became apparent why.

“We'll have to walk,” Optimus sounded annoyed with the prospect, but Bumblebee couldn't blame him.

They'd lose a lot of time, but they'd lose an equal amount trying to drive around the pit.

So they started walking.

Blitzwing and Brainstorm joined them to save fuel, and once again they were traveling as a group. It was slow-- a pace that obviously did nothing positive for their leader's attitude, but it progressed.

They stopped soon after, just in time to catch a glimpse of their newest problem. Or perhaps their oldest, depending on the way one saw it. It didn't matter either way to Bumblebee, to him, Megatron's alt-mode was just a bad sign no matter how you thought about it. The warlord had been becoming more daring throughout the night, swooping a little closer as they moved along.

And every time he did, Blitzwing would lean over Bumblebee, shielding him from the warlord and keeping an optic out for any other signs of danger or threat. His monocle zoomed in and out as it followed their stalker. And then Megatron turned tail once again and Blitzwing backed off, and everyone continued walking as if nothing had happened.

Optimus slowed, eyeing something to their left. He moved towards it, beaconing for the others to follow him. “We'll rest here for the cycle.”

‘Here’ being an overhang of some metal foundation. It was likely one of the major pieces that held Metroplex in his place but now looked to be nothing more than a twisted metal plane. It would hide them from sky patrols at the very least, and ground patrols could be mediated with a night watch.

Blitzwing was one of the first to find himself a spot on a flattened metal tube to sit on. Bumblebee followed, crawling up onto his lap and immediately placing his palms on the mech's torso.

“You're still running hot Blitzbutt,” Bumblebee hissed, he turned immediately and called for Ratchet.

Ratchet, who's been with Prowl and Blurr cuffing Jazz to some bent tubing immediately perked up, rising with a swear about his knee joints. He lumbered over and climbed up beside them, mimicking Bumblebee's test for temperature.

“It's fine-”

Ratchet interrupted him with a soft, “Like Frag it is,” and pulled out his field kit.

Bumblebee could feel his Conjunx's tangible anxiety as Ratchet moved around him and popped open a side panel. He did his best to offer a soothing wave across their bond, but by the look on Ratchet's face, it wasn't good.

“His replacement T-cog is overheating,” Ratchet said and handed Blitzwing a cube of coolant, “His frame isn't integrating the replacement.”

Ratchet dove back into the open panel, this time holding two precision tools. He grunted several times, even yanking his servo back as he burned the sensitive metal of his servos.

With finality, Ratchet pulled back and sighed. “It's got a few more days in it, maybe. But it's not going to take the heat for too long. Your mechanisms are still using it to some effect, but they'll start melting to it eventually.”

Bumblebee was the one to shout out, “Well then take it out if it’s gonna melt him from the inside out!”

“No,” Blitzwing stated, “If it still has days on its life then it will last us until Iacon. I will simply refrain from Transforming unless needed.”

Click-Whir. “Or maybe because I want to!” he giggled wildly.

Bumblebee frowned.

“I thought we agreed to stop doing this,”

Optimus didn’t turn as Megatron approached to his left. His gait was slow and steady-- as non-threatening as he could make it.

“For the record--” Optimus stopped to clear the tired static from his vocalizer, “- for the record I had no idea they’d activate Metroplex. I promise. I truly only intended the losses to be my mechs and I.”

Megatron sat on the rubble beside him, and Optimus finally gave him a glance. The Warlord looked pensive, as if caught on a thought he couldn’t quite untangle. He was damaged and dusty as they all were, but carried it with a veteran’s grace Optimus couldn’t. He knew how tired and worn it made him look.

“I won’t say I’m not mad, because I am. But we agreed to stop the back and forth and I intend to put effort into that,” Megatron responded.

“I’m sorry,” Was all Optimus had to offer.

Megatron looked at him then, offering a small grin, “Well, I have to admit I’m not entirely innocent in all of this either. So I suppose I should apologize as well, for everything I mean. Including Tarn, and the scars,”

Optimus couldn’t do anything more than blink dumbly at the Warlord. His field flared out as well, a hesitant offering of help and comfort. Megatron was sincere.

“I tend to live in a world that rewards the removal of your enemies rather than a negotiation,” Megatron motioned around him, “And look where that has gotten us. I can’t say I’m truly regretful, I’m sure you understand that. But I can say the rift it’s created was the last thing I wanted.”

Optimus stared at him openly. He wouldn’t let himself to spill optical fluid here. He didn’t need to look weak here, not now. Yet still-

“Thank you,” Optimus managed.

Megatron offered a small smile.

“And I meant it, about being thankful. I know I went about it the wrong way, but thank you. For what you’ve done for me. I wouldn’t have made it this far without you,” Too late. He raised the meat of his palm and wiped a charged tear from his own cheek.

“Don’t thank me. I’ve done nothing but work against you. I wouldn’t blame you for running back to the Autobots and claiming you split my forces on purpose. They’d call you a hero you know.

Ultra Magnus may be a smidge upset about his hammer though.”

“Thousands of years ago, Ultra Magnus told me to not be a hero, that I didn't have the spark for it,” Optimus sighed, looking up to Hadeen and then closing his optics as if the light was too much for him. “I hated myself for it at the time. Up until then, it was all I ever wanted; to actually accomplish something for the greater Autobot forces.”

He thought that day would be burned into his processor forever. He could still see it; Ultra Magnus’ disappointed stare, the brutal hate from mechs he had spent years in training with. He could remember the utter shame of it all, and he didn't think he could forget that.

But it all seemed so distant now, like a fog had covered the taste of the memory, so far yet a part of who he was.

“It took me a long time to realize he was right, to actually internalize that fact, but not for the reasons he’d given me. I think what he was trying to say was that I shouldn’t try to be an Autobot. I’m not a hero, because I let mechs down, Megatron.”

Optimus allowed himself a pensive gaze to the sleeping pile of those who had followed him this far.

“I’m just a mech trying to get us all out of this situation in one piece,” Optimus intentionally brought a digit up and tapped on his helm, “And somehow I’ve failed to even keep myself together. I think, what I’m trying to say, is that I’d rather have this end, then be hailed as a hero. If I make it out of this, and everyone hates me, I’d be okay with that. Because at least then, everyone would be alive.”

Megatron hummed, tilting his helm up as if asking the bright sky above them for answers. Optimus mimicked him, though did not search for something he wouldn’t find. Though, the light brought with it evaporation of the tense air the two of them had worn like old paint for far too long. Optimus felt a bit lighter, his admission coming as a relief more than anything.

“You don’t plan on making this permanent then,” Megatron leaned back and let out what only could be a sad chuckle, “I suppose I should be relieved, I will have my army back after all.”

Optimus found himself smiling along with him. He pulled back his battle mask and looked over to Megatron, “And I will have Bulkhead back.”

“Would it be inappropriate If I told you I’ll miss you, even if we only spent a month actually working together?”

Optimus let out his own amused chuckle, leaning back and cocking an optic at him, “Oh? Sorry but I don’t think I can say the same. I have to do this all over again one more time.”

Their humour laced itself with truths for the next hour or so they chatted. But as tired mech do, they slowed eventually. Comments became shorter, quips became less quick to their witts. And then, Optimus yawned for the first time in what felt to be an eternity. He felt tired, the hundreds of years catching up to him in a wave of a needed break.

Megatron’s chuckle softened down to something more of a venting smile. They looked each other over, inspecting for something neither could pinpoint.

“Recharge,” Megatron offered.

“And who do you expect to watch for patrols then? Everyone needs sleep, at least I’m used to

functioning without it.” Optimus answered a little smartly, still holding a friendly smile.

“And who worked all of those long nights with you?” Megatron turned a little more serious, “But, I’m sure Ratchet or Prowl would oblige your exhaustion for a few hours.”

Optimus yawned once more, “Wow, their designations and earth terms in one sentence? I’m impressed.”

“Recharge Optimus,” Megatron hummed, “I will watch over you for the day cycle.”

It was a bad idea. He really shouldn’t let Megatron have free reign with no one awake. But Megatron reached out, telegraphing his intentions and Optimus allowed him to rub his spinal struts soothingly. It didn’t help his permanent tired processor. He found himself leaning into it, slowly and carefully. And then, leaning into Megatron. And the, he powered down-- cuddled sat up into the side of his enemy.

Prowl woke instinctively as something moved beside him.

Jazz was sat up almost ramrod straight with his Optics trained forward, looking distinctively Grey. Prowl didn’t hesitate to spring up and try to find exactly what he was looking at. He found it almost immediately.

Hadeen’s set across the horizon framed Megatron’s back sat on a pile of rubble. That wasn’t exactly the issue though. His proximity was concerning, but what was even more alarming was Optimus with his helm in the mechs lap.

Jazz looked to him, “And you’re telling me we’re on the right side of all of this?”

Beside them, Cyclonus stirred, shifting to see exactly what the issue was. He let out a large vent and shuttered his optics. His voice was full of recharge static when he spoke, “It’s normal. Just leave it.”

“Normal?” Jazz asked, “Optimus is snuggling with the unmaker.”

“And you’re laid beside three other Deceptions,” Cyclonus all but hissed, “Your point?”

Prowl turned to their left and looked to an awakening Ratchet, silently asking for some sort of perspective on the situation.

“So long as Optimus got a night’s full of sleep, I’m not complaining. Besides, this ain’t the weirdest thing that’s happened recently. ”

The rest of the night progressed about as awkwardly as one might expect. They continued moving as a mass, optics on the sky and pedes on the ground. It was tense between Jazz trudging in the middle of them and Megatron chatting idly with Optimus, but it was progressing at least.

They eventually came to the end of Metroplex’s wound on the world and we’re back to the last of the flat expanse of farmland before Iacon. Still, the tension persisted for several hours into the dark.

That was until something came speeding from the back of the group. It lit Prowl's battle protocols and he wheeled around, losing his grip on Jazz's cuffs. He almost pulled his stars out until recognized the vibrant of Bumblebee running up behind them. He ran past him, right up to Blurr, and planted a firm smack on the mech's aft.

Blurr, who hadn't been expecting the assault nearly jolted out of his plating, watching for a moment as Bumblebee ran past him laughing. Not one to be out sped, Blurr chased after him, almost knocking down Ratchet in the process. From behind Prowl, Blitzwing let out an excited cackle, engaging his thrusters and took off, picking up Bumblebee right as Blurr was about to catch him.

"Not fair!" Blurr complained, keeping up with the two mechs by pede. He continued chasing them for a moment before another shadow loomed over them.

Brainstorm flew over Blurr, barely keeping up. He extended a servo to Blurr, "Going up?"

It ended in a small dogfight between the jets; low to the ground, still in their root modes and with no weapons. It was quiet save for some shouting, and some occasional smacks against metal as they tagged one another.

It lightened the mood at the very least.

"We're going to draw attention to our position--"

Optimus interrupted Megatron, shrugging, "We haven't seen a single patrol yet, Let them blow off some steam."

"You don't think that's odd? The lack of patrols?" Jazz asked from beside him.

"It just means they're waiting for us," Optimus provided, "But I don't believe that's stopped us yet."

Cyclonus looked to Prowl before nodding towards the others. He hesitated, not sure exactly if he should join in.

"Go, I'll watch Jazz," Ratchet grunted.

Prowl nodded, handing Jazz off to Rat hey before jogging off to Cyclonus and taking off.

Night three ended with a lighter mood. They had gathered around beside an energon storage unit. They had found the container in the middle of a crystal field, and proved to be a blessing on their low stores.

The group had settled now, much to Optimus' relief, and they all seemed to easily fit together now if a little jagged around the edges. They didn't all get along, but they were working together.

Except for Jazz.

A loss he'd have to accept for this loop, he didn't have much of a choice.

They sat around and fueled, talking amongst themselves. It was nice.

Megatron sat beside him, "You know, I'm starting to think there's just something about you that brings mechs together."

Optimus shrugged, "I've had lots of practice. If you can convince a mech it's in their best interest to play along, they generally will."

Megatron smirked, "Are you sure there isn't a little deception in you? You're definitely not made up of all that Autobot superiority at least."

Optimus laughed, "I'd like to think I'm the best of both options."

Ratchet approached them, handing both of them a cube and sitting down on Optimus' other side. He held his usual scowl but didn't seem hostile. "Would you two stop acting so friendly, it's creeping everyone out."

"I think you're the only one complaining Ratchet," Megatron retorted, "everyone else seems fine to keep to themselves."

"Play nice, I don't need you two scrapping it out again," Optimus smiled.

"Again?"

"It was actually kinda funny now I think about it. On one of the more interesting loops, Ratchet tried to take you on one on one. Bumblebee tried a few times. Blurr once. I think you can figure out how that turned out," Optimus provided.

At the time those fights had been never wracking acts of desperation. But it was very uncommon they actually ended with anyone offlining. And now, in retrospect they just kind of felt... repetitive. Like a sort of comedy clip show of mechs being thrown around in ridiculous situations.

Megatron puffed up and took a swig of his energon, "Well of course. I don't see how any of you could take *Lord Megatron* down by yourself."

Optimus shot him a side glare.

"Alright. Perhaps one of you could,"

"How long did I last?" From across their small circle, Blurr piped up, quieting a few other conversations around them. He shrunk down almost immediately, "What? You don't want to know how long you lasted against the scariest Deception of all time?"

"I take offence to that," Blitzwing crossed his arms.

Optimus scoffed, "Scariest my aft. One time Bumblebee insulted you and you transformed into a tank and plummeted into a frozen lake. Yeah. Terrifying."

"Ha!" Bumblebee immediately jumped onto his Conjunx's lap, jabbing a finger into his chest, "I didn't even have to touch you!"

Click-whir-tsss- "One more word and you sleep by yourself bug! Or would you rather we sort this out now?"

Bumblebee ignored the new noise of Blitzwing's transformation; the telltale his of escaping heat. "Come on! Let me have a win just this once!"

Even Prowl joined in, "at least you all survive the whole ordeal. I end up having to piece together the Allspark most of the time."

"OH!" Brainstorm piped up, "Drinking game! Every time someone dies in a story take a shot!"

Several mechs huffed but Ratchet was the one to retort, “there isn't any high grade here, genius.”

“I'll take that as a compliment,” Brainstorm removed his mask and smirked wildly, “give me two hours and some scrap metal and I'll have a distillery up and running. So yes. I'm a genius.”

“No one is drinking,” Optimus scolded, “it's all fun and games until we get taken by surprise.”

“Is this what you do? Laugh about the destruction you've caused?”

All optics turned to Jazz.

The mech visibly shrunk under the scrutiny, visor downcast and plating tight down to his protoform. He looked as if he was scolding himself for even speaking up and he glared at the floor with tight spite.

Optimus softened.

“I've been--” *angry, spiteful, scared, suffering*, “upset for a long time. Self-hating for longer than that. It's nice to relax for once. Pardon us if we're trying to make a good experience before this all goes to slag again.”

“Sentinel was right. You're--”

Optimus choked on the swig of energon he was sipping, half sputtering his mouthful back into the glass.

“Sentinel? You know he's full of absolute slag right? Blackarachnia and I still hold a grudge over Aracna-7. The mech is full of slag,” Optimus brushed off.

“At least he has morals!”

Optimus felt his own expression fall.

“Don't interpret the Autobot code as a moral one. The two are not interchangeable. If they were, I guarantee Ultra Magnus would've sent help the *first* time I reported deceptions on earth. And we wouldn't be in the situation we are now.”

“Bulkhead and minimums would have gotten. A trial,” Prowl added.

“Omega would have a functioning processor,” Ratchet took another sip of his fuel.

This was war. Certain things could be forgiven, but you couldn't call them moral, not when they fought the end of the suffering so harshly.

Optimus stood, mood entirely soured. Hadeen rose once again, hitting his plating with a warm ray. It hit Jazz directly in the face.

“Recharge,” he ordered to the group, “I will take first watch.”

“I've come to relieve you from your duties,”

“No need,” Optimus retorted, “You don't need to pretend we're cadets to join me. Come. Sit.”

Megatron took a few steps forward, and sat himself down on the storage roof, beside Optimus. Above them, Hadeen hung high above them in the sky. It warmed Optimus' plating and kept him awake to watch the skies and the horizon. He kept to his duty.

"I'm serious Optimus. If the only way to get you to sleep is to lay you on my lap, then so be it," Megatron laid himself backward so he was laid out on the roof, warming his dark plating in the sun.

Optimus laid down beside Megatron, "I can sleep fine myself. I'm fine. Really."

Megatron rolled over, shifting his entire body over to rest an arm over Optimus' waist.

He flinched.

Megatron scowled, "I'm sorry. I didn't. Mean to presume--"

"No," Optimus pulled the retreating servo back onto him. It covered most of his midsection, "It's nice. For once. Please. Stay?"

"Of course," Megatron agreed, taking the moment to move in closer, to wrap himself partly around the smaller mech. Curiosity got the better of him, "May I ask why?"

"I'm--" Optimus could feel his vocalizer constrict, "I'm going to be alone again. It reminded me tonight; what it used to be like."

It felt as if there was looming darkness over him, despite the glaring sun. It crept up on him, wrapping around his spark and constricting. It was a familiar feeling; a dark mix of both anxiety and foreboding that built up with the inevitable resolution.

"All I have is memories Megatron. And that's all this ever will be. I'm going to lose everything. *Again*. I'll be left with nothing but scars and my records."

Optimus covered his optics, not wanting to get emotional over it. He'd done this fifty-three times. He needed to get over himself. He needed to do what needed to be done. And if that meant being alone again, then that's what he'd do.

"Ratchet will be suspicious again, Prowl will go back to thinking I'm a nut case. At least Bulkhead will be alive. You'll go back to..."

"One last night then. You and I. The one time we worked together," Megatron took a strong steadying vent, "The things you keep in your subspace stay, correct?"

Optimus paused. He lifted his arm away from his optics and gave Megatron a liquidy gaze.

"What?"

"Here," Megatron reached into his own subspace and rummaged for a moment, "It's not much. But it's what I have on me."

"A datapad? I collect enough of those Megatron."

The warlord shrugged, but handed it to Optimus anyways, "Take it. For when you're alone."

Optimus turned it on, but Megatron immediately turned it off, scowling with a flush on his cheeks, "You are not alone Optimus. Not yet."

Was Megatron embarrassed?

“Recharge,” The larger mech ordered, “We have one last leg of our journey in the morning.”

Optimus subspace the datapad and obeyed.

Night four started tense. In front of them, the faint glow of artificial light illuminated the horizon. It was ominous, a bright reminder of exactly what came ahead of them. If Jazz’s outburst last night had diminished the good mood, those lights absolutely ruined it. They woke and started moving in relative silence.

Jazz got a horrible feeling with the way Megatron and Optimus whispered among themselves. Or the way Prowl wouldn't meet his optics.

He should have stayed quiet and just played along.

If he was being honest, he was scared. Sentinel would probably punish him for failing. And by the way, things were going here, it looked like Optimus would do the same. And he knew if it was up to Megatron that he'd be dead. For Jazz, those lights off in the horizon signified his ends at the hands of a prime; as a hostage or the stockades.

He trudged forward, following a few steps behind Prowl. He had no intention of speeding up the inevitable.

“I wanted to say Goodbye,” Prowl said softly.

Jazz didn't respond. It felt as if his spark was sputtering.

I just wanted to save us, he wanted to say, I am so sorry. I know I was wrong. Please. I just want you to know that.

But Prowl already hated him. He was only here now because of some vision he had before. He wouldn't lie to himself about that. He didn't deserve to get to explain himself anymore.

He was alone. And it was all his own fault.

“I mean it. This is goodbye Jazz. No more tricks. Perhaps we'll work things out in another timeline.”

Please don't leave me alone like this.

But Prowl was already walking away.

His helm was down then another shadow approached him, Jazz tensed. His chain moved hands, and suddenly he was completely stopped. Prowl moved ahead with the rest of the group.

Jazz didn't look up at Optimus.

“I think you already know what everyone wants me to do,” Optimus said, “And I think you know I don't want to do it.”

Jazz tensed. This was it. This was the moment Optimus used him as a bargaining chip and when he didn't get what he wanted Megatron would--

"I owe you Jazz. Perhaps not for what you've done this time around but you've been more help than I could have asked for. I know you're just trying to do the best you can with what you've been told. You always have," Optimus' voice was steady, his tone took an air of finality.

Jazz looked up at him.

"You're not a bad mech Jazz," Optimus moved forwards and undid his cuffs, "I just wish you thought the same as us."

Jazz stared down at his wrist.

"There's no use in involving you further," Optimus turned.

Jazz sputtered, actually running forward to try and follow him, "What am I supposed to do now?"

Without command. Without Sentinel. Without the Autobots.

Optimus turned back to him and shrugged, "Whatever you wanna do."

Optimus transformed and caught up with the others.

They set up camp for one last day cycle in one of the empty reserve barracks, right outside of Iacon. It was better than their past accommodations at the very least, but still, not that one may consider the relative extravagance of the nemesis.

The barracks were old, from back when Iacon held military personnel. They were used now mostly for enforcer housing but were empty.

All hands at the enemy line he supposed.

They gathered after a brief recharge. Optimus lead the meeting.

"Iacon will be mostly defenceless, most of the Autobot army will be focused on what remains of the Deception army," He started.

"But," Megatron interjected, "No one's heard or seen Ultra Magnus or Sentinel Prime. Which suggests an element of expectancy."

Prowl stepped up to the table, he held himself straight up, shoulders back and optics hard, "The hall of records is located several clicks west of the Council chambers. They have one known guard; a cadet by the name of Smokescreen and a librarian by the name of Alpha Trion. They won't be much of an issue."

"Well," Brainstorm shifted awkwardly on the spot, "There are the twins. I know they're still in Iacon."

"The what now?"

"The twins," Brainstorm clarified, "Jetfire and Jetstorm. As far as I know, their frame modification was a success."

Prowl winced, "Yeah, Jazz and I saw it mid-process. So we have a pair of seekers to worry about."

Optimus rubbed his comm array, “Actually more like one big seeker with fire and wind powers. Its name is Safeguard.”

Brainstorm lit up like it was Christmas, “You're kidding! The Safeguard project worked?! Wow, Percy's gotta be proud about that one. Heck, even I'm impressed.”

“Oh-kay---” Megatron shifted, “Optimus, moving on please?”

“We have a general idea that Ultra Magnus had is also looking for the Matrix, but has no idea where it is, so it's in our best interest to keep the fact we know where it is a secret,” Optimus explained, “So, we think it's best if we split up, take a portion of the city each.”

Prowl started pointed to mechs around the room, “Cyclonus and I will take the southernmost point. Blurr and Brainstorm are the fastest pair, so they'll head north, Blitzwing and Bumblebee will take the east. Leaving Optimus and Megatron to enter through the west. We'll converge on the council chambers, but then having split what's left of Iacon's defences as thin as possible.”

A small cough disrupted the silence and Ratchet raised a servo, “Forgetting someone?”

Megatron leaned forward and smirked, “Of course not medic. You get the most important job of all.”

Ratchet flinched, “I don't like where this is going. At all.”

“You'll be happy to know apparently Optimus plays the long game. And while I was following your little group around I just happened to see the first signs of seeker patrols. And a few Deception stragglers. ”

“No. Nope. No way.”

“Ratchet--”

“I am NOT playing dignitary. Nope. You can find someone else to play your little warning system. Starscream is going to kill me!”

Megatron scoffed, “Please. Just tell him his wings are pretty and that you made a mistake. Then just send him our way. He'll drink it up.”

Optimus placed a servo on Ratchet's shoulder and offered a small smile, “Once Prowl and Cyclonus has cleared the southern path, you can drive in that way. I'd rather keep our only medic outside of the line of fire.”

“Excuse me?! Who served in the great war?!”

Blitzwing, Brainstorm, Cyclonus and Megatron all raised a servo.

“Shut it, all of you,” Ratchet hissed, “I'm a combat medic, I got thicker plating than Bumblebee and Prowl combined! You are not putting me on sideline duty. No way.”

Bumblebee sat forward waving an arm, “We'll take Ratchet, especially if Blitzwing's T-cog gets messy.”

“Cyclonus and I will watch for Starscream. We can send him towards you and Megatron,” Prowl offered.

Megatron shrugged, “Works for me.”

They laid down together for what Bumblebee assumed would be their last time before they were given their marching orders. He was nervous at the thought of it, a tight constriction formed around his spark. It quelled somewhat as he laid himself in Blitzwings arms. He could feel the way their sparks fluttered into a rhythm. It called to him from just behind Blitzwings battle armour.

Bumblebee shifted, pressing their chests together. Blitzwing gave him a puzzled look.

“Not here, I know,” Bumblebee gave a passing glance to the others who had settled around them as he whispered, “I just want to be close.”

Blitzwing brought a servo up, lightly dragging it across Bumblebees back in a light stroke. He didn't speak but seemed content with that answer.

“We're gonna be alright,” Bumblebee whispered, “It's gonna be alright.”

“You don't have to convince me little bug. Cybertron will freeze over before I let anything happen to you,” Blitzwing smiled, offering a small kiss to the top of his helm. It was small, but a lot for the stoic mech, especially with others in the room.

It was comforting. They kept their toned hushed as they continued.

“Don't be such a sap,” Bumblebee smacked his wing lightly, “This isn't nearly as scary as when Tarn was coming for us.”

Click-whir-tsss, “ or that time Megazarak stormed the ship, ” Blitzwing followed with a soft giggle.

“Sh! You'll wake them!” Bumblebee nuzzled his head down against Blitzwing chest, smiling, but shutting his optics, “Besides, nothing was scarier than that time you held me off the side of a building.”

Click-whir-tsss, “Not fair! That doesn't count! We didn't even know each other back then!”

Yeah. They were gonna be alright.

Everything was going to be okay.

Chapter End Notes

Boop Boop Next time

WES

How Loud are the Drums of War?

Chapter Summary

Everything starts to come together.

Chapter Notes

I'm back

Haha

Longest chapter yet, unedited because I would like to move on now please

Thank you

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Optimus sent the go signal.

They're over the wall in no time, Cyclonus moving with ease into the outer limits of the city. Prowl had never been to Iacon before. He knew it was spoken of very highly, especially by the dignitaries that generally lived there. They spoke highly of its Spires and shining buildings, and how they would glisten in the shine of both Cybertron's moons. They called it gorgeous; Untouched by war and the filth of the Decepticons. It's great walls a sign of its immense fortress-like standing among other cities.

Perhaps it was just the sour taste in his mouth over the whole thing, but Prowl thought it was just alright. It looked like any other city to him--, sprawling like a living organism unculled by a delicate hand.

He and Cyclonus landed at the southern gate. The lack of defences made Prowl feel like he was walking directly into a snake pit. The two of them made for an easy target, especially against what was likely a trap, but hopefully, they would have the air advantage at the very least. Unless Safeguard showed up.

Prowl decided it didn't matter. They had come this far and he wasn't about to back down now. They'd faced the DJD, The Autobot army, the Decepticon army, and an alien planet. If a walk in the city was going to kill them, that may as well be it. Not that Cyclonus felt the same way.

They walked for a while. Iacon was a large, sprawling city and Prowl didn't have the chance to explore any of it during his time at metroplex. Even around the edges of its walls, it looked as if it might overflow. But other than the buildings, the city felt empty without the bustle of mechs. Prowl assumed they knew the seekers were coming and moved civilians underground-

“There's someone following us,” Cyclonus announced very nonchalantly beside him.

Prowl extended what he could of his senses, trying to pick up exactly what Cyclonus had, but just

as soon as he picked up on it, the mech was gone again. "A spy, not unexpected," Prowl responded.

Cyclonus grumbled in what Prowl could only assume was a crude form of approval. He'd take what he could get.

They continued walking for some time before Cyclonus spoke again. It came just as suddenly as before and Prowl thought maybe he had sensed another bit, "I don't like how quiet it is. What is the point to this if we aren't even running into mechs?"

Prowl shrugged, "I'm assuming they're likely still back in crystal city. And I doubt it helps we're all wearing signal dampeners."

"It's not like we're hiding," Cyclonus mumbled, "It's just not right. I feel like we're about to be ambushed at any moment. It's aggravating."

It was a tactic. He didn't know who, or what they were planning but it was as if he could feel their intent in the air. Like catching just the faintest hint of a familiar smell, yet no matter how you turned, that was all you got; a whiff.

The air felt like Vos. And Prowl didn't like that in any capacity.

They continued walking, and Prowl just clung to the hope that Optimus knew what he was doing.

And then, a chime.

Faint enough at first to feel almost surreal. A single ring, and at this point Prowl was so on edge that he actually stopped, drawing his companions attention.

Cyclonus was quick to the uptake, pulling out his greatsword and skimming the alley that Prowl had turned towards. He hummed as if thinking for a moment, but when came back empty in a cause he asked, "What is it? Our stalker?"

"No," Prowl answered almost immediately. The alley was small, barely large enough for a deception of Cyclonus' size to fit through. The buildings around it cast a dark shadow into it that seemed to block out hadeen above them. "It's this way."

He didn't know what 'it' was. In fact, he didn't know what he was looking *for*. But whatever 'it' was, it was this way. As if instinct Prowl moved towards the dark, like a migration. He didn't know why he was headed this way, but he needed too, and the ominous feeling that if he didn't turn this way something bad would happen simply grew.

And suddenly he was in the dark of the small passage, Cyclonus grumbling behind him.

"Optimus said to stay on course towards the city center..."

It felt... It felt like a vision, Prowl decided. As if his frame wasn't his own. It was disorienting, and his processor fell into its usual fog.

"Prowl. The passage is getting more narrow. I can't follow you much further--"

And there was that call again. High pitched and whining, as if beakoning him just a bit further. Like coaxing a small human child, each step moved his destination a step further. But still. The mysterious force seemed so close, *so so close*.

His spark thrummed at the sight of a turn in the alley. Yes. Just beyond there. Then he'd have his answers. Just a few more rushed strides.

"Prowl! Stop!"

Cyclonus sounded distant. That should have worried him.

But he rounded the corner anyways, his spark beating desperately in its casing, as if trying desperately to get back to its own frame.

Wait.

Prowl's frame didn't stop, but the realization at least brought his processor reeling back to the present and out of the visionary fog. There was a mech in front of him, a soft blue piercing in the dark of the alley. Small-- small compared to the mechs he'd been around as of recently, but still larger than he was if not by much. If fact, the closer he drew the more familiar it became.

Concerningly familiar.

He stared back at himself.

The other-Prowl stared back at him.

No. It wasn't him. It was, in a sense. It was as if his spark was in two places at once, blurring the lines of exactly where he was. But this Prowl was only faintly viable, as if not really there. But he was there. Just... Larger, and wearing Yokeatron's helm. With upgrades.

The other Prowl didn't speak. But somehow Prowl could make out the mechs intention.

A guide. This Prowl knew where they needed to go. There was a sense of urgency there.

Part of him wanted to return to Cyclonus and bring him here. He could use the back up, and how he knew that he had no clue. But somehow his instincts screamed of a time limit. He had to be somewhere, *now*. And Cyclonus would catch up with him on the way.

The other Prowl lifted an arm and stepped out of the way, pointing down further the alley. As Prowl stared down the dark corridor his rational processor slipped out once more.

And he took off sprinting.

"You know, I never thought I'd be the one asking for the full story."

Megatron looked down at him, optics flicking curiously over Optimus as they walked. He didn't give any indication of confusion nor understanding, so Optimus persisted.

"I know you know I'm not stupid, so why are you here Megatron?"

Megatron huffed and stopped walking, "I told you. We need to stop working against each other. Why would I--"

"You're not telling me *everything*, I didn't say you were lying. Which is a start," Optimus insisted. He stopped a few pede steps in front of Megatron and turned back to him. "What is it?"

"I won't let the Matrix fall into another mech's hands. Especially not yours. I've dealt with it for too long to just have it pop back into the equation, especially with a mech who's a known match for me." Megatron's battle systems came online. Though quiet, Optimus knew the sequence all too well and set about stopping this before it started.

Optimus defused the situation by shrugging, "Yeah alright. So long as we send everything back to the way it was, you can keep the thing for all I care."

Megatron stared at him, expression genuinely surprised. For a brief click Optimus thought perhaps he had misspoken. Or that the sentiment had made Megatron angry. But instead the warlord's features softened some, as if the weight of an oncoming battle had been lifted from his shoulders. He lightened some, straightening and approaching Optimus.

Megatron didn't touch him-- he hadn't done so without explicit permission for some time now. But the proverbial servo on his shoulder spoke of a relaxed comradery between them.

Optimus gave a small smile, "Though, I do think it will be fun walking up to the front door and simply handing you the matrix."

Megatron rolled his optics and they both continued forward, "Just be careful I don't shoot you on sight."

"You won't," Optimus smirked, "I'll just pull the innocent repair bot optics and you'll listen to me. Maybe enough to let me hitch a ride again."

Megatron laughed, loud and hard, "Never again, you little pain in my aft."

But there was something of a longing to Megatron's sentiment, as if he really wanted to say more on that notion. The want leaked into his field, mixed with a nervous affection. Optimus could almost hear the words Megatron couldn't say.

When this is all over. Please, come find me.

It was an impossible hope. That by some miracle they wouldn't be at each other's throats or simply on opposite sides of the outcome. It made Optimus' spark drop. Whatever *this* was between them-- whatever was starting was going to end in a matter of hours.

And they both knew it. And so, the sentiment remained unsaid between them. And all Optimus could do was rest his servo on the compartment holding Megatron's gifted data pad.

Perhaps whatever was on it would help with the loneliness this time. It was a far reach, but he could still hope. And perhaps he could look back on this loop for a fondness of something that may have been between them, if they had more time.

Time; it seemed cruel now that Optimus had too much of it all he could do was ask for more. It was just... Cruel. If he ever talked to this washed up deity Nova Prime had called Primus, he was going to have a few strong words to say.

But what was lost, was already lost.

"ah," Optimus frowned, "I have one more thing to ask. Just one more favor."

"And what might that be? "

"I need you, when this is over, because no one else can-- I need you to reset the loop. Please."

Megatron kept his gaze forwards, lip plates pressed into a thin line as if thinking over the request. He thought for a moment, letting the silence of the city roll over them.

"Are you asking me too--"

"Yes. I am."

BOOM !

"Oh Look!" Blitzwing giggled wildly, excitement flowing over their bond, "The calvary is here!"

From Blitzwing shoulder Bumblebee picked out the deception signature before actually seeing the few dots to their right. They came from the south, but by the look of it, they should have been stopped by Prowl and Cyclonus by now.

"And they're already in the city," Ratchet crossed his arms, "If they keep this way, we're gonna have to redirect them."

Bumblebee frowned. He didn't think they had the fire power for that. But they had to do what they had to do.

"Prowl's not picking up his comms either," Ratchet's usual scowl deepened and Bumblebee twisted to look down at him as they kept walking.

Something wasn't quite right. Not totally wrong just yet, but not quite right either.

There's a sharp pop and then Blurr comes onto the comms. ::Can *anyone* get a hold of Prowl?! Brainstorm and I can break formation, we've got nothing over here.::

::Megatron and I are busy here, and we could really use the seekers right about now!:: Optimus rasped.

:: Yes sir! Taking off for the south now!::

It was only minutes of walking before Brainstorm was visible above them, taking off towards the south. Bumblebee kept his optics on the sky, watching for any other sign of some other sort of excitement.

They continued their march, unease flowing through the three of them. Hopefully Prowl was alright. If he wasn't--

Blitzwing stopped walking. Confusion filled their bond.

Bumblebee hooked an arm around the Deceptions neck and slid across his chest, holding on to his kibble as he looked at the larger mech in the optics. He gave an inquisitive pulse over their bond.

"Ze flying autobots," Blitzwing said, motioning with his helm off towards the center of the spiraling city.

The mech flew at them with daring speed; Not quite as fast as a seeker, but definitely faster than Bumblebee was comfortable with. It took him no time to move himself to Blitzwing back, hook himself into Blitzwing seams and prepare for take off. This was all happening so quickly.

"Be careful," Ratchet pat Blitzwings back, lifted slightly and gave a determined smirk, "Give 'em hell you two. But undo all my hard work and it won't be safeguard you'll need to worry about."

Prowl reappeared in some new section of the city.

He ran out of the alley, slowing to a stop in the middle of the street. It was empty and silent, and whatever feeling that had been driving him here silenced itself. He whirled around, spark racing as engines strained. But, anticlimactically, there was nothing.

No war March, no mechs. He could hear fighting off somewhere in the distance, but that was the extent of it.

Prowl whirled around, trying desperately to find what exactly brought him here, and why.

What was he expected to find here?

"- Come on. We have time. It will be fine."

"Prime sir, really we--"

"Do you want me to throw you back to Ultra Magnus? I saved your aft, you *owe me*-- "

Jazz.

And worse.

Sentinel.

Prowl didn't know exactly where the voices were coming from, not exactly. So he followed his instincts, throwing himself back into the alley from which he came. He flattened himself against the wall, melding into it as best as he could as he listened. He dimmed his optics and waited, as they rounded a corner and came closer.

They were walking idly. And they weren't alone. Though the footsteps that followed were many, they're vocalizer were silent as if something sucked any conversation from them. At their front, The two mechs kept talking.

Prowl kept himself pressed to the wall as tightly as he could. It slightly obscured his view of the pair as they approached. Despite that fact, he could make out how Sentinel lead as Jazz trailed behind. But very quickly his servo was grabbed. And Sentinel pulled His Major up into his embrace.

"You *owe me* Jazz," Sentinel crooned, "You know what Magnus would have done if I didn't step in."

There was that call again, but this time it felt less like a pull and more of a compulsion.

And the 'not-him' was back.

The ghostly image of himself stood from its place beside him. It stood, moving swiftly out into the open. Prowl, having not known where the apparition had come from in the first place, could do little more than stay hidden and pray that the thing didn't blow his cover.

Whatever Sentinel's request was, Jazz seemed to give into it. He leaned upward, pressing his lip plates into the prime's. Slowly, the Major relaxed into it. Neither seemed to notice as the transparent copy of himself moved past them, pausing in front of them. He could tell he was upset by the image, as if it knew something more about the two than it let on. His spark knew it, somehow.

No one can see him, Prowl realized.

The pale image of himself stopped, looking at the two mechs embraced in a war zone. The troops with them, paid no mind either. The image, for as unsettling that it was, simply tapped Jazz on the back and moved out of the way. It picked up the pace once more and bolted to the other side of the road, darting into another alley.

Jazz broke the kiss, looking back to see what had touched him.

And their visor's met.

The visor he looked into was cracked, and though the glass of it hadn't chipped away the crack seeped light brighter than the rest of the visor. The damage didn't end there though. There were dents over his frame, some deeper than others. But what drew Prowl's attention the most, were streaks of blue painting up his inner thighs. Half of it was damage, that much was evident, but the other half...

Prowl's spark turned to lead.

Jazz had picked his side; The autobot side, and he had seen Prowl.

"What is it, my spark?" Sentinel purred. He leaned his helm over Jazz's shoulder and kissed his cheek.

To the Major's credit he didn't flinch or move. He simply let a small, devious smile curl up on his lip plates and his visor dimmed. He leaned his helm away, allowing for Sentinel to lean down and kiss his neck cabling. It felt like the calm before the storm, and Prowl was simply waiting for the hurricane to hit.

"Although I'm enjoying the attention my Prime, we should get moving," Jazz rolled his shoulders, turning back around and wrapping his arms around Sentinel's neck, "But we need to keep moving if we're going to intercept Optimus. I just got a comm that the seekers are on their way."

Intercept Optimus.

Prowl stopped himself from diving forward. Instead, he listened and watched.

"Starscream is a whole other issue, but you're right. See? Being a good autobot isn't that hard, is it?" Sentinel hummed, pecking Jazz's forehead.

Jazz shook his helm, but from Prowl's angle he couldn't quite catch what his facial expression was. But his frame was relaxed, field too far to read and he gave no other hints that he may have seen Prowl. Had Jazz not actually seen him? Was Prowl just paranoid.

No, The other Prowl had guided him here for some reason. It just wasn't obvious what that reason was just yet. Prowl felt like he had just a few too many pieces and not enough of a general image to fit them together.

He took a vent, and thought for a moment.

Where was he?

His navigation system responded with something even more confusing. Somehow, through darting between buildings, he had Moved back towards Iacon's outer wall, though this time slightly further to the west. He wasn't quite there yet, but it wouldn't be long at the rate he was moving. Sentinel seemed to be one of several search parties, likely scattered around the city. And now that Optimus had been found, they were likely moved out to intercept him. So perhaps it was a Good thing they were already headed West.

And for some reason, despite both imprisoning and abandoning him, Jazz was helping him out. Or at the very least, not turning him over to Sentinel. In fact, If he could just get the two separated--

His thoughts were interrupted as a shadow cast over the two mechs in front of them. The image was familiar, with large looming wings. Every autobot looked upward, frozen in place as it disappeared.

There was a tense vent between them all. If it was seekers, they were all done for. If it was One of Optimus' group, that meant something had gone wrong. But it was only a beat-- barely enough time to pull out a blaster in defense.

The mass of purple and black plating landed, making the ground below them quiver. It was too heavy to be a seeker. But that meant--

“Jazz?! What have you done with Prowl?!”

Jazz looked up, Visor a bright blue with surprise, “Cyclonus?”

Megatron felt odd. And though their wandering into the city brought the familiar onset of battle into his system, his spark didn't settle into the usual calm of battle. He was anxious. Worried. And somehow that was more unsettling than the task at hand.

After so many millions of years chasing the same exact goal, it was a challenge to let go of it, even if temporarily. Even if this benefit him in the long run, it still left an ache in his spark to abandon the rest of the Deceptions like this. Even if this would all go away by the end of the day cycle, a part of him still burned to wipe the autobots from this planet.

But priorities change. And right now, protecting what used to be an autobot was his main priority.

The explosion had come from seemingly nowhere. But in all honesty Megatron had expected this at some point. Ultra Magnus knew they were coming for the Matrix, and they had five days to prepare for that.

But this was the Unmaker and Optimus they were dealing with. And if the Autobots expected an easy fight, they had another thing coming; Another, frighteningly powerful thing.

The explosion had been familiar enough to Megatron to realize they had been a form of high heat combustibles. And as the melting temperatures licked at his plating, his main concern turned to Optimus. It was easy enough to grab the smaller mech and jump backwards and out of the immediately damaging zone. The leap sent them back several feet, but behind a split metal sheet that was a halfway decent form of cover.

And the blaster fire started. It felt like rain as it flashed past them.

A peek around their makeshift cover supplied Megatron with enough of a view to make out the lines of autobots that had burst from side streets and into an offensive formation. Three lines of autobots, but no sign of Magnus yet.

Beside him, Optimus engaged his axe.

"They're watching the main roads," Optimus smirked playfully. "We'll, we shouldn't have to wait long now."

Being in on the plan for once was a new rush in on itself. Though only nine strong, they had a decent chance at winning this and all because the little mech at his side had orchestrated everything brilliantly to their advantage. It was so odd, thinking of another mech to be the same caliber as him. Perhaps not as an equal in pure strength alone but definitely an equal on the battlefield.

He started firing back, aiming his Canon around the corner of their makeshift cover. He could barely hear Optimus shout beside him but the suggestion came as clear as day.

Megatron transformed, jumping up from his crouch and into the air with a showy twirl. Most of the blaster fire followed him, giving Optimus enough space to dart forward. The mech could be extremely fast when he needed to, transforming down into his earthly altmode and transforming back with just enough momentum to crash into the autobots lines with no more than a few minor injuries.

He's beautiful.

Not now. Not here. He needed to focus.

A few well placed shots and some good tactics on Optimus' part and they stood on a pile of elite guard soldiers.

Megatron turned, opened his intake to say something and immediately stopped, staring at a mech he hadn't seen approach them in the fray. Optimus stood in front of him, optics grim as he too looked past Megatron.

"Megatron," Starscream smirked. He stood proudly, tossing aside something Megatron took a moment to even recognize as a helm. It looked as if it had been ripped from the chassis it once belonged to as pieces of its internal spinal structure were still intact. *Brainstorm.*

"Optimus Prime," Ultra Magnus hummed. As if rehearsed he motioned for another soldier to come forward, Dragging a heavily dented Blurr with him.

Optimus' field went sour.

He could tell something was wrong as Safeguard approached. There was something weird about the dual colored mech, and it wasn't the way its colours split directly down its middle. Bumblebee couldn't quite place it, no matter how he tried to piece it together. But as they drew closer, the feeling grew.

It wasn't until they shifted upwards, and met almost chest to chest that Bumblebee could see the horror in front of them. It made his lines run cold in a flush that ran down his entire lines. He hung onto Blitzwing's shoulder but he could feel the warframe's revulsion not only in their bond, but in his field. Bumblebee couldn't find it in him to blame him. This was beyond cruel. It was mutilation.

They've welded them together.

Bonded was the word that came to Bumblebee's mind. But not by choice. It was a perversion of the word.

The weld marks were ugly, as if someone had rushed to get them together and out on the battlefield as quickly as possible. Parts of the metal had blackened by the unsteady servo not trained to work with plating this thick and had simply tried to force the two pieces of metal together. Bumblebee knew those types of welds; the ones where your servo hesitates because you're unsure of these two pieces truly belong together. Your servo hesitated just for a click and suddenly the plating was burnt. Except the mech doing this hadn't taken a cloth to the surface afterwards to remove the char marks. They had simply left it.

They had left all of them.

They broke apart; Blitzwing pushing them apart and diving back and down and away.

Safeguard had looked so so so scared.

A flush of heat had Bumblebee looking back towards the horror behind him, spark thumping in his chassis. They weren't fast enough.

Safeguard perhaps didn't have the same kind of battle experience and fire power that Blitzwing had. But he-- *they* surely had speed. Blitzwing had sacrificed that advantage long ago for thick plating and a third configuration.

Bumblebee hadn't that advantage, nor opportune placement.

The heat hit them both directly in the back, tearing a scream from Bumblebee's vocalizer, or perhaps it was both of them. His audial rang so badly that he couldn't quite tell. The heat was an immense burning that felt as if it was boiling off. But just as it started it was gone and his cooling systems worked overtime as he desperately tried to continue to cool himself down.

The heat burned through his circuits and several warnings popped up in his HUD including an imminent shut down warning.

Bumblebee shuttered his optics repeatedly, he couldn't pass out after one hit-- wouldn't pass out. Not yet.

::If I get angry, I'm going to melt:: Blitzwing stated ever so calmly, as if it wasn't an actual issue.

Bumblebee vented, peeling himself away from the overheating frame as much as he could without throwing off their delicate balance.

::What?!:: Bumblebee shot back over their comms.

:: I can't get cold enough to Freeze him,:: Blitzwing added, and Bumblebee could almost hear the cogs turning in the triple changer's helm.

Blitzwing looped again, this time aimed away from their opponent. Blitzwing was pulling out. One hit and it was obvious they couldn't take him. Not in this state. It was escape or death.

If it hadn't been fire-- or if it hadn't been a flight frame--

No. They had both known how bad Blitzwing's condition was, and they had ignored it. The triple

changer's spark agreed.

::Ratchet,:: Bumblebee tried. But his comm only spat back static.

::Optimus!! ::

::Prowl?!?::

::MEGATRON?!? ::

Static.

They couldn't transform and gain more speed. But safeguard could, and they were already faster than the pair to begin with.

Blitzwing communicated something over the bond. It was a new feeling. Something that they'd never communicated before. It filled Bumblebee with panic, but Blitzwing only responded with the same steady feeling.

Finality.

The smaller of the two knew what it meant. But he could pretend he didn't. Perhaps if he pretended hard enough-- did the right thing just one more time-- he could save just one more person once again--

"Bumblebee--" Blitzwing sounded horse, as if his vocalizer was starting to melt along with the rest of him.

"It's going to be okay! I told you that! Remember?!" It was all he could do to yell of the wind rushing around them.

"Bumblebee--" *He sounded worse.*

"No! No! We bonded so we wouldn't be apart again! You don't get to leave now!"

"It's still new-- you'll live," Blitzwing encouraged. He could see and feel them shifting around just one more time. The angle was clumsy, as if the jet didn't exactly have full control over himself. It made Bumblebees tank roll, but not for the turbulence.

"So will you! You've pulled through so far! I'll-- I can weld it back together for you!"

They were approaching Safeguard once again, and Bumblebee could see Blitzwing's cannons lower. His frame heated up once more, to the point Bumblebee could see his own temperature gage go critical.

Blitzwing switched to comms. It was likely his vocalizer gave up at that point, ::Close you're optics. We're back in the cave, you know the one::

Despite himself, Bumblebee obeyed. He just needed to pretend. This was all a bad dream. It *wasn't happening*.

::You were such a sap,:: Bumblebee accused. There was something wet running down his cheeks, but he refused to acknowledge what it was. They were back on earth after all, and they were safe, ::We should merge again. There was just so much to you-- so much I never got to--::

He felt them shift, this time slightly more upright. He could probably count the clicks now, if he

wanted to.

::Shush. So much you'll get to see. A reformed cybertron. The end of this all,:: There was a hitch in the static of the comms, :: And I will be there. I will be there and we'll go back to earth and sit on the lake again::

::We'll go ice skating this time, we'll have time together:: Bumblebee clung to the metal bellow him. It burned him. All of him burned. But he wouldn't let go. Couldn't.

::And you can tease me all you want little bug::

::I love you::

::I love you too::

There was a collision, Bumblebee felt it. And then an angry yell, Another splash of white hot heat and the tearing of metal. Only then did Bumblebee open his optics.

Blitzwing had torn Safeguard in half. His helm had been completely melted off, all that was left in its place was a soft pool of red metal.

Bumblebee felt it before he saw it.

Just nothing; A hollowness, void of absolutely anything and everything. But only half of him. The other half still burned alight with the adrenaline of the fight, still focused on Safeguards decent and crash into the ground below.

“We’re okay, You're okay, I told you we would be okay” Bumblebee lied. The plating beneath him was dulling, though the heat of it persisted. Bumblebee swallowed, hard, and grit his dentae, forcing his cooling systems to continue, they just needed to land and he could get them both cooled off. They would be fine.

Blitzwing’s thrusters gave out, and then they picked up speed.

Bumblebee screamed, but there was no one there to hear him. The metal beneath him took most of the brunt of their landing.

And then there was a burning in his spark. Intense, as if his entire existence was on fire.

And then, there was nothing.

Cyclonus was a powerhouse as most Deception war builds were. But a lone Deception no matter how high ranking, wasn't going to just rip apart an Autobot battalion by themselves. And so Prowl needed to make a distraction of his own.

Well, perhaps Strika or Megatron could, but that wasn't exactly the case in this situation.

Prowl shot forward, aiming for Sentinel. If he could just take down their team lead, it might convince them to scatter rather than keep fighting. It was a loose plan-- a stupid plan, but it was what he could rationalize within the span of a few nano-clicks. At worst, this would give Optimus a better chance to make it to the Hall of records. At best, he could finally take down Sentinel.

This wasn't exactly the revenge he had in mind, but he wouldn't pass up the chance.

He couldn't get to Sentinel directly, not with Jazz still so closely pressed to his side. But that didn't mean he couldn't get to them both. Jazz had betrayed him after all, and Prowl wasn't about to let that go.

The three shurikens he threw hit both of them; two lodging in Jazz's bumper and one in Sentinel's helm, digging into the softer metal of his faceplates. They both yelled, peeling apart into separate directions, clutching their wounds. It wouldn't do much damage, but it was enough of a stun to give Prowl time to get close, and that's all he needed for now.

There was a purple blur behind him as Cyclonus took on the marching Autobots, leaving the two mechs of rank to Prowl.

He went for Sentinel.

But Jazz had always been faster than him, and a lot more unpredictable.

Jazz wheeled around quickly, pulling something from a compartment on his side, and jamming it into Sentinel's neck. The Prime looked betrayed, a surprised expression crossing his faceplates before it immediately turned to rage. His face contorted, lowering his gaze to the bother of them.

"Move," Jazz immediately ordered, pushing Prowl towards the way they had been marching, following in a few steps. He kept his servo on Prowl's back, the contact grounding despite whom the touch was coming from.

Prowl turned, only to be met with another push forward. "Jazz, what are you...?"

His instincts acted first, and he shot out another star, but this time it missed the charging Sentinel right behind them. Jazz caught on quickly enough though, and threw out his servo, smashing it into the underside of Sentinel's chin. He yelled again and this time he clutched his mouth as he went down as energon seeped between his digits.

"Move! Before he gets back up! Tell Cyclonus to meet us two blocks west of here,"

Prowl gave a passing glance to the alley where his doppelganger disappeared, debating his options. Jazz was a traitor, Jazz had betrayed both sides--

But Prowl found himself nodding, and following Jazz's lead, "Alright. "

Optimus half expected to feel the usual flush of anxiety flood his systems. But the feeling never came. Instead a steady determination and courage straightened his spinal strut. Confidently he strode forward past Megatron only to stop and line their backs against one another. The warlord vibrated behind him, engines idling with a battle-ready fury.

Three hundred years ago if anyone had said to him, that one day Optimus Prime would stand back to back with the Deception leader, ready to face down Starscream and Ultra Magnus he would have likely laughed it off as some cruel joke. But now it was the simple fact that he could trust his once enemy that let him stand so tall now.

Perhaps, this loop wasn't such a failure after all. In fact, had it not been for so much death, he may have actually thought about making it permanent. At least then, for once, he may not feel so alone.

The vibrating engine behind him reminded him of that. He wasn't alone. Not yet at the very least.

"Oh Optimus," Ultra Magnus took a step forward, tapping a repaired Hammer along with him as he approached. "I had such high hopes for you. And yet here you are, helping Megatron of all mechs. You must wear that Deception brand with pride."

Optimus took the statement for what it was; a threat. Deceptions were the enemy. They were to be exiled or killed, no exceptions. If they came peacefully they received a trial, and a stay in to stockades or trypticon. And now the autobots accepted that he finally was one of *them*-- no longer part of *us*.

"No more pride than an Autobot Brand, Magnus. Now let Agent Blurr go. This is between you and I." A familiar rage boiled in his spark. The anxiety he had been consciously suppressing evaporated into a burning pit. He started with an approaching walk-- calm but with his shoulders rolled back and axe out in front of him.

Ultra Magnus reached for a blaster on his hip and raised it, aiming directly towards the speedster. "Oh Optimus Prime, when will you learn that mechs must take responsibility for their actions."

Blurr's optics didn't plead. They held Optimus with a sense of resignation. If he wasn't being held by another mech, Optimus suspected he would have saluted.

Optimus readied and took off in a sprint in one fluid, practiced motion. There was no time for hesitation, no time for anxiety to fill his spark. This was it. If he failed here, he failed everyone.

Behind him, he could feel Megatron's field turn into a genuine nervousness. Optimus didn't give it a passing thought.

BANG

"See? Look at what you've made me do?"

He wasn't faster than a plasma blast. No matter how he strained his engines or how hard he pushed his struts. But Magnus had expected him to stop his advance. Instead, he moved faster, straight into the Autobot leader.

His shoulder collided with ultra magnus' midsection and he let out a guttural yell. It came from somewhere inside him, deep within his spark. It felt like something burst within Optimus, and its only way out was through his vocalizer.

He didn't let it distract him, and the collision gave him enough of a stop to his momentum to pivot and fling his axe straight into the helm of the mech that had held Blurr, instantly killing him. There were more autobots now, gathering to shoot at the oncoming seekers. He couldn't find it within himself to care, instead, looking back down at the mech he had knocked over.

"Do you not think I understand the concept of consequences Magnus?" He asked, tone dripping with an acid he had never heard within himself before. He could feel his vents heave with the strain, but it was easily ignored in favor of some catharsis.

"Do you know what you're doing?! What you're starting?!" Ultra Magnus was up on his feet again, quicker than what was natural for a mech his size. He swung the hammer with ease, forcing Optimus to jump back some.

Above him, something flew past them and Optimus immediately recognized it as Megatron's alt mode taking off with Starscream close behind.

He's next. Optimus made a mental note. *For Brainstorm.*

"No," Optimus hissed, taking a wide arc around the Autobot leader to retrieve his axe, "But I know exactly what I'm ending."

It's a move he's practiced time and time before. The last time he did it, he ended up with Megatron pressing him up against a building and it getting heated.

It was a different kind of heat that filled Optimus' chassis now. And it burned.

"You are nothing but a delusional sparkling, Prime!"

Optimus shot his grapple between Ultra Magnus' legs and hit something on the other side. He wouldn't make the same mistake twice.

"MY"

He dropped to his knees,

"NAME"

retracted the grapple, propelling him forward faster than he could run,

"IS"

Activated his axe,

"OPTIMUS"

And slid forward between the mech's leg, holding out the axe. It was just enough force to lodge the energy blade of his weapon into his knee. With a groan from the motor in his arm, Ultra Magnus' joint finally gave, separating his lower leg strut from the top as Optimus continues his skid forward. He could feel the paint peel from his legs as he detached the grapple from what he now realized had been the foundation of a building.

The Magnus was screaming behind him, and Optimus let his attention flit up to Starscream. Megatron was keeping him close.

Good.

With their leader down, the Autobot line turned their anger towards him, but it cost them greatly, and the seekers behind him started overtaking them, leaving Optimus open and unbothered. It let him focus, narrowing his attention on his next offender. He wished he had his jet pack but he'd simply need another way up. Starscream wasn't getting away from him that easily.

He bolted for a wall, bringing his axe up to pole vault himself to a ledge on the second story. It was only a matter of timing from there. Wedging the pole of his axe into the wall behind him, he waits and then extends and springs forward as Megatron brings the seeker around for a lower loop. He feels himself yell something. He can't make it out.

It's something actually, that he's seen Bumblebee do. He hooks his pedes into the kibble of Starscream's back, near the bottom of his wings. His one servo holds the axe and his other creeps into the seams into Starscream's shoulders. The mech is hot to the touch, but Optimus can seem to make out much more than the heat and the way the seeker starts to thrash, twirling into a roll. But the way he's wedged himself against the seeker means he isn't going anywhere.

So he brings his axe down, right into the wedge of the seeker's wing and his back.

They decended quickly as Optimus fights the axe out of Starscream's wing, bringing a spray of Energon up with it. He brings it down again, opening the gash further. He rides Starscream down into the ground and they hit the open roadway with a vicious shriek of metal on metal.

"Skywarp! Thundercracker!"

The seeker below him is bloody. Optimus in wedges himself and stands, allowing the seeker to turn over. He immediately strikes the barrels of the seekers null rays, cutting them and disabling them.

"Optimus! I-I-" The seeker begs and babbles. It makes Optimus tank roll, and suddenly all he wants is for the seeker to *stop. Shut up. You're nothing but a pest. Just. Shut up.*

It feels like there's something burning in him. The image of Brainstorms torn helm and Blurr's scared optics is burned into his processor. Looking down at the seeker now, the way the paint has peeled from his face and cockpit, and all he can see is them.

"You have to understand! Vos-- Megatron, he---"

Mechs that trusted him. Mechs that caught caught up Entirely by accident.

And then there's Starscream before him. Begging. *Oh, would you shut up--*

It compulsion that makes him bring the axe down with a sickening **crash**. The first it goes straight through the glass of his cockpit. The second-- into the metal at the back of the opening he's made. The third and fourth fight off the seekers desperate swipes to protect himself. It's pathetic. And it only angers Optimus more.

Have some dignity. You never even gave Brainstorm a chance--

The fifth, exposes what he's looking for, and the seeker finally slumps back, helm hitting the road in exhaustion and spark shining brightly from the gash in his chest. He shakes, pitifully. And it is only then, when Starscream is vulnerable to the point of his life being at risk, does Optimus feel better about it. He straightened, rolling his spinal strut up one disk at a time.

The fire fight around him didn't phase him. But he could see how the mechs around him-- Decepticon and Autobot, give him a wide space as his steps off the groaning seeker, and back into the middle of the road. They didn't necessarily stop around him, but he could see the way they moved back, as if he might turn on them and turn the tide of the fight in one motion. But they seemed, almost instinctively, to know that he was not after them.

There was a Medic at the Magnus' side when Optimus returned. At least there was briefly, before the red and white mech backed off, optics wide and nervous.

"Get back here!" The Autobot leader snarled. It came out desperate though, lacking its usual dignified order. It was as if the fragile commander facade was gone. Once impervious and unfailable, that image of his supreme leader was gone; leaving not a mech in its place, but a disappointment. It was more the shattering of an image, painted carefully, but when stripped away left nothing more than worn canvas in its wake.

He was false. And that should have torn something away from Optimus. It should, in theory, and at one point it would have. But now, no longer Autobot, but not quite Deception either, it felt little more than a nagging interest rather than a demoralizing revelation.

Ultra Magnus was no ideal thrown from a pedestal as he was for many. No, to Optimus he was

little more than an obstacle now-- a thing to be removed for its transgressions.

For Blurr.

For Brainstorm.

For Minimus.

For Bulkhead.

He raised his axe above the mech, casting a shadow over his frame. The Magnus gaped up at him; no speech for the small prime now, The Magnus Hammer all but useless now it was broken.

"Why are you looking for the Matrix?" He asked, giving his once idol a chance to answer. It was that single burning question that at the very least, Ultra Magnus a chance.

And he scorned it.

"First elita and now the planet, what kind of glitched mech are you?! And you're looking for the Matrix?! As if Primus would pick a mech so fragged up as you! As if Nominus would pass his primacy to you!" The Magnus all but yelled at him now. His vocalizer spat static with pain, and he winced. Laying his helm back onto the ground as his vents huffed loudly.

He was bleeding out, Optimus realized. The medic hadn't had proper time to coteriez the stub of what remained of his old superiors knee. Each shouting rant he want on was draining him, tiring him out just as much as the wound was. The broken joint bled profusely. Leaving a trail that seemed to pool with whatever slope there may have been to the ground.

Its like life is literally slipping from him, Optimus thought, Or perhaps not. Perhaps that's simply his self righteousness. Good.

"Nova mentioned him," Optimus said, axe still raised and optics still cold. His anger was a wall between them, leaving little more than indifference in its wake, "As far as I'm concerned there isn't a mech out there who's going to stop me. Not you, and not some Senator with a stupid notion of right and wrong."

"He has your datapad-- he knows-- And he'll find out where you're going-- where you're all going-- "

"He knows nothing," Optimus spat. Literally spat oral lubricant at him, down onto the broken chassis below him, " *You* know nothing."

"I know you split them up-- Gave, gave yourself more time-- a chance to actually make it. You've done this *before*. You sacrificed them for yourself and you'd rather take that out on *us*-- "

Optimus brought the axe down.

Ultra Magnus' optics faded.

Why didn't he fight back harder?

Something landed behind Optimus.

"Both sides are retreating," the thing spoke. "Optimus... Are you alright?"

Megatron.

"No."

Optimus stared up at the entrance to the hall of records. He'd been here once during his academy days. Back then, he Elita and Sentinel were nothing more than cadets studying for their final exams. He remembered hiding behind one of the data stacks, waiting for Sentinel to come around the corner to scare him.

The building had aged some. It's metal wasn't givingway, but the primer on its surface had started to peel, giving way to the acid rain of Cybertron's seasons. You could see sections of the building that had been repaired for such damage. The repairs were utilitarian-- often covering or neglecting the old ornate designs of Cybertron's golden age, covering them with more functional, bland materials.

He was here. He had made it.

"Optimus--"

Optimus turned slowly. Megatron stood at his side, optics hard as he motioned behind him.

Optimus turned to look behind them.

Ratchet carried Bumblebee over his shoulder, the damage evident on his frame. Black scorch marks and half melted plating made the small mech look a lot older than he was. And thankfully, he was still offline but still a dull yellow.

"Blitzwing didn't make it," Ratchet explained as if his lack of presence didn't explain as much already, "But neither did Safeguard if that's any consolation. There's still a few strangling battalions wandering around though."

Optimus nodded and looked back towards the Iaconian Hall of records. He was here, actually here. All he had to do was climb the steps and there were few ways the could end with loosing another mech.

"Brainstorm ran into the seekers, Blurr hit Ultra Magnus' guard," He heard himself say. It explained enough between them.

He could hear Ratchet's invent to add something, but the sound of a jet engine cut him off. Optimus drew his axe instinctively and lowered himself to take off it was another seeker.

Cyclonus landed slightly further back in caution, looking Optimus over with a critical optic. From his back, Prowl and Jazz slid down, landing on the ground with easy *thuds* . They should have been a welcome familiarity. They should have been a grace from whatever deity was pulling the strings here.

Instead, they caused a boiling in his spark.

"Where were you," He asked, looking down at Prowl critically.

Prowl opened his intake, ready to explain but he didn't feel like excuses.

"You said you would watch for Starscream," Optimus spat, spark whirling within his chassis. "But Brainstorm ran into them alone. And they tore his helm straight from his chassis like-- like

vultures. Leaving Blurr alone to run into Magnus. And what are you doing with him of all mechs?" He pointed towards Jazz, sheathing as his vocalizer picked up.

"There was this--" Prowl swallowed and Jazz moved forward to try and defend him.

"It doesn't matter," Optimus whirled around. "Brainstorm is dead. Blurr is dead. And Blitzwing is dead. Starscream is dead. And Ultra Magnus is dead. And this is almost over. It doesn't fucking matter."

He didn't feel like himself. Everyone stared at him like he'd done something appalling. He had just killed the Autobot leader after all. He didn't blame them.

"Optimus--"

Optimus snapped, battle mask flying open as he bared his dentae at Megatron beside him. "Shut it. I don't need a lecture on absolutely anything from you. Let's just get this over with."

Optimus took a few steps up the stairs before he heard anyone else move to join him.

Chapter End Notes

4 character deaths.

8,500 words. It's finally here.

I've tried to kill off Sentinel 3 times now but he lives to see another chapter. Again.

Next time:

The final battle

Optimus Prime

Chapter Summary

It feels so weird to be done.

Also a warning. The comments are probably going to ask a lot of question about Nova. Nominus, and Alpha Trion. I'm sorry their back story didn't make it in here. But I promise it will be explained in the sequel.

Yes sequel.

Chapter Notes

Done done done hurray! I'm getting drunk tonight!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

A boiling determination drove Optimus forward into the main atrium of the hall of records. It was spacious-- the kind of room that lacked direct cover, which left him feeling exposed. To what extent? He didn't exactly know; a stray blaster shot, a sneak attack, maybe Jazz at his back? Optimus turned to look at the Major who seemed more confused than relieved. Optimus wondered if he could feel relief at any point. Things were the way they are now and he'd deal with them until it would disappear again, stuck in a repetitive tandem. That's how it always went.

The atrium was sparse; it had a door in the north end of the room. Optimus had been here before and he knew that the sprawling hives of data lay just past it. There was no way they'd find a mech in there without some sort of guide. Usually, there was an attendant of some sort to guide them. But with the ongoing fighting, the desk had sat empty.

He wasted little time admiring the open room and instead turned to Prowl, motioning towards the administrative console in the middle of the room. "Does your access identification still work?"

Prowl nodded as he walked past him, jumping over the counter and immediately set to work, his digits making quick work of the console. When Jazz followed, Optimus craned his helm to observe him. "What exactly am I looking for?"

"An admin, Some sort of office," Optimus suggested, "Something to work with. The records span downward almost fifty floors, and I'd rather not have to hunt through them all."

Prowl nodded and set to work, leaving the five of them in an odd limbo. It was quite to the point they could hear the climate control of the building, how the soft fans continued to pump cooler air around them. It was almost calming, if not for the unsettling way it made Optimus feel even more exposed.

"Wanna chime in here Cyclonus," Ratchet asked, nudging the Decepticon, "You're the resident future specialist."

"Optimus Prime was a secretive mech," Cyclonus mumbled as he looked around the atrium with something akin to awe on his face, "And seeing as I only joined the war after my reformat..."

Optimus turned, opening his intake to speak to Ratchet, but someone else beat him to it.

The single door opened revealing a stout, but sturdy white frame. With a spear drawn, Optimus took the sight as a threat and acted accordingly.

"Halt!" The mech yelled, his vocalizer wavering slightly as a realization dawned on his faceplates. He was scared, but only transferred into the mechs determination and he clutched his energy spear tighter while widening his stance.

Optimus drew his axe. Of a mech wanted to stand in his way now, he was going to remove them. No more games. No more plans. He was too close to risk anything for the spark of a single mech--

He stalked forward, trying to stop his line of thought there. He didn't have to kill, just had to incapacitate--

But you did that to Magnus and you still killed him in the end--

"Woah! Woah! Woah there big mech!" Jazz bolted over the desk, standing in Optimus' path, planting a servo on his chest plates.

"You have no say here," Optimus growled, looming over Jazz. In his mind, the Major has no right to stop him. Not after his betrayal, not after everything that happened. He let his engine roar dangerously in warning. Jazz was not safe from his ire. He gave him a chance to walk away from this.

"Smokescreen?" Prowl's voice drew his attention, making him look back up at the guard.

Prowl approached the mech cautiously, servos up. He stayed back just far enough to be out of range of the spear. He spoke calmly, despite the mech providing no real threat with both Megatron and Optimus in the room.

"Smokescreen calm down--"

"I should have known you would have gone traitor, you never fit in Prowl, never would open you panels," Smokescreen hissed, buckling down on his stance a little harder, as if ready to pounce.

Behind him, Optimus could hear a familiar charge of a fusion cannon, it's hum almost welcome. This was costing time. Whatever Prowl was planning, he better move faster.

"Smokescreen," Prowl took a vent, "You can't win this. Stand down. Do you really want to take on the leader of the Decepticons? Do you want to lose your spark?"

The small mech wavered, but only marginally. He doubled down, glare flipping between the few mechs in the room. His lip plate curled up into a panicked snarl, letting out his own rumble of his engine.

"Oh enough of this," Megatron scoffed lowering his cannon and stepping forward. "We are not going to make any progress if we keep stopping to have idle conversations."

He moved past the group of them. As he approached Smokescreen, the scared mech jabbed his Lance forward, aiming for Megatron's legs. But he was a warlord, and Smokescreen was a cadet rushed through his training. Megatron grabbed the spear, and with the guards weak form pulled the

weapon from his grasp and tossed it across the room.

Smokescreen gawked and backed himself against the door, staring at Megatron with wild optics. The mech looked scared, terrified that Megatron would crush him now he was disarmed. Optimus almost expected it himself.

Instead, Megatron loomed. Stood still as if deciding what to do with the mech. It was if, stripped of his usual *modus operandi*, that he had to think around the situation, rather than through it. And then, it seemed to hit him, and he pushed the mech aside, letting Smokescreen stumble into a clumsy pile on the floor.

"The Autobots have stooped so low, using civilians on their front lines. Come on," Megatron looked back, meeting Optimus' optics. He could see the awkward resolution to them. "We should move before some mech of actual standing finds us here."

Optimus couldn't find it within himself to disagree.

There was a stunned silence and the warlord moved to the next room, not staying to answer the questioning looks. Jazz let up his grip on Optimus' chest, opting to stare at the now empty doorway.

Prowl was the first to move, turning his helm back to the monitor he was working on, and clearing his vocalizer, "The main console is located a few floors down. It would be a good place to start."

Optimus nodded, moving towards the door, the others starting to follow. He only made it a few heavy steps before smoke screen was up again, blocking the door. He could feel his field flare in warning, and Optimus flared his own in kind, swamping the poor mech.

"Don't push your luck," Optimus advised, expression dark and tone dripping, "Move. No one is going to miss a data clerk in the mess out there."

To Smokescreen's Credit, he had a good self preservation instinct. He moved away, giving way to a mech he knew he couldn't beat. He didn't know if it was a sense for the outcome of the situation, or if he realized living gave him a better chance of calling for backup. Optimus didn't exactly care.

Optimus pushed past him as he spoke, "You'll never reach the Alpha Trion. Or the senator."

The senator?

"Nominus," Prowl immediately filled in, then looked as if he had confused himself. "He's here?"

Cyclonus' engine rumbled dangerously, "If we have a chance to end this here, now. I'd advise taking it."

Optimus walked through the door, beaconing the others to follow. He looked back, examining how Jazz moved to Prowl's side, giving him a questioning glance before moving forward. He didn't like it, not when they both had turned traitor before. But Ratchet coming up behind them both at least allowed him to relax marginally. Sandwiched between them, the two could get into less serious trouble at least.

Megatron had to bend to fit under the lower ceilings of the archives, tilting his helm to the side while pulling his shoulders in as to not knock over anything. It would have been comical, if it didn't provide the large mech a great disadvantage should another fight break out.

"I think I'm piecing things together," Optimus mumbled from behind Megatron as they descended

to the next floor.

"And what might that be?" Megatron hummed, awkwardly looking over his shoulder to look at Optimus. His optics glowed with an ember interest.

"So. If Nominus is here," Optimus started softly, piecing together what bits he could as they descended, "Nova said that the last time anyone had seen the Matrix, his protégé had stolen the thing. And you said--"

"The last time anyone had seen it, it has been split in half," Megatron filled in, "I don't like where this is going."

"Right. And Ultra Magnus was looking for it. He asked me several times where it was. So, what I think happened, is Nominus was Nova's predecessor. And when he ripped the Matrix from his chest, it broke forcing Nova into a time loop and somehow, maybe he got out of his loop by... I don't know? Hiding the thing? Giving it back to Alpha Trion?"

"What you're implying, you know, Is that Ultra Magnus ain't the great ultimate leader that everyone thinks he is," Jazz butted in, earning a glare from the two mechs ahead of him.

Prowl offered a humming consideration, flicking out his field in support, "It would explain why he arrested me. Optimus knows where the Matrix is, and by arresting me and letting him arrive on Cybertron, all Nominus would have to do then was follow our steps."

"Even worse," Megatron's tone took a dangerous rumble to it, "if he's here before us, putting the thing back together, then we have to get a hold of it before he traps us in this nightmare of an anomaly forever. If we don't get this thing into Optimus' chest plates soon, we're doomed."

Cyclonus hummed from the back of the group, "You know, it always confused me. Nominus and Optimus Prime both always claimed to carry the Matrix. And when Rodimus received it, he always refused to show it, except to Megatron."

Prowl perked up, turning fully to look at Cyclonus, optics wide as he seemed to realize something. Hia vocalizer raised an octave as he spoke, "No. That's... Optimus!"

Prowl turned, visor bright as he met their leaders optics, he looked panicked, as if realizing someone had put a fusion cell in his morning fuel, and any movement now would kill him. "Not Senator Nominus! Nominus P--"

"Shut up!" Ratchet yelled, shifting Bumblebee on his shoulder as he looked upward. It was loud enough to silence then all out of their theories and look up along with him.

Dust danced down from the ceiling, rhythmically, falling into Optimus' optics and irritating them. The ceiling wasn't doing that before now, so why--

Thunk. Thunk. Thunk.

Optimus blinked. Someone was above them. Someone knew they were here. It was Jazz's field that pulled him back to the present, and away from those wandering footsteps. He looked down at the mech, noticing how his plating had clamped down, but faintly started to rattle nonetheless. Jazz was *scared*. Jazz knew something.

"Sentinel," the white Autobot whispered, visor glued on where the footsteps were located, slowly making their way away from them and towards the stairs that would lead to the level they were on. And the worst part, was that Optimus could recognize that field above them. Jazz wasn't lying.

Optimus whirled around, looking between Megatron and Cyclonus, panicking himself. They were too large to fight effectively, especially if Sentinel Prime wasn't alone. They were too large to fit between the rows of data logs. Too large to hide. Too large to help.

And then there was Ratchet and Bumblebee. Bee needed Ratchet at his side in case something went wrong. That left him and the two mechs he trusted the least in any sort of fighting condition.

"Cyclonus. Take Ratchet and Bumblebee and keep moving. We'll catch up," Optimus ordered immediately before turning to Megatron, "I need you to go with them."

"Absolutely not," Megatron rumbled as loudly as he dared. But the footsteps were getting closer, and Optimus didn't have time for an argument.

Cyclonus and Ratchet pushed past them, heading towards the stairs, seemingly understanding the situation better than Megatron did. "Meet us down there," Ratchet said as he passed. It was a warning in of itself, one Optimus appreciated; as if he died he'd still have to face the medic's wrath, one way or another.

"Megatron," Optimus rumbled his engine. "I need you to keep Ratchet and Bumblebee safe. You can't move properly in here. And you're going to get in the way if we have to make a quick exit. I need to be able to trust you with this. Please."

Megatron hesitated, "You're in no condition to be left alone. Not with two mechs who've betrayed you before. Your glitch--"

"Megatron. Please."

"Well, well, well," Both of them turned, and a familiar blue and orange mech stood just in front of the stairwell they had come from only moments before.

Sentinel strode towards them, sword and shield activated. We looked proud, and his field pounded against him in waves of excitement, as if the volatility of the emotion itself held power. Dried Energon stained down his plating on his left side from a wound in his neck. It made the Prime look wild and domineering as he moved easily between the rows of data pads.

"Optimus, Megatron, Jazz and his little pet. Things must be turning around for me. And all five of us crammed down here... makes quite the arena doesn't it?" Sentinel's tone dripped with an intent that peeled down Optimus' paint. This wasn't the same mech that Optimus had fought months ago. Something had shifted in him. Something greedy. Something that had been just below his plating all this time.

Optimus engaged his axe and barked at Megatron once more, "Megatron, I swear! Get out of here!"

Megatron blinked at him only once before turning and moving towards the next set of stairs, following the others.

Sentinel picked up his pace, engaging both his sword and shield, "Oh no you don't, I haven't come this far not to get what I'm owed!"

Optimus engaged his axe in turn, pushing past both Jazz and Prowl to meet the strutting Prime. They held each other's gazes like old friends, but something burned between them.

"Betray me now," Optimus spared a glance to Jazz, field lashing out in warning, "And I can't promise your safety when Megatron investigates."

And then he and Sentinel were charging at one another.

Sparks shot out from between them as Optimus' axe hit Sentinel Prime's shield. They stayed for a moment like that, Sentinel needing both arms to brace against his opponents force. He was still riding off the violent adrenaline of his fight with Ultra Magnus, and it showed. But the scene itself brought him back to the steal haven, this time without the crippling anxiety. It was still there, but quiet behind the burning need for a resolution.

"Oh Optimus," Sentinel tried to purr, but the strain was obvious in his vocalizer, "Or what should I call you now you're a Decepticon? Opticon? Deceptimus--"

Optimus raised his helm, bashing it into Sentinel's faceplates and both staggered backward, rubbing against their new dents.

"Sentinel--"

"Sentinel *Prime*. "

"Sentinel. I won't let anything stand in my way," Optimus hissed as he charged forward, "And take a guess where you are? Besides, it's two against one."

On the Stealhaven, Optimus had taken Sentinel out with brute force alone. One swing of the Magnus Hammer had put him into a stasis pod and out of commission. This time wouldn't be any different.

Well it would be. This time he had an ally.

As Sentinel brought his shield up, to meet Optimus' axe, Prowl went low, coming out from an aisle of data behind the Prime. Their weapons met again, but this time the ninja bot got a hit in; shurikens to the back of his leg struts. Sentinel went down on one knee, howling as he fought to keep up his strength against Optimus' assault.

Their battle masks finally engaged, snapping into place as the same resolution fell over them both.

"That's where you're wrong Optimus," Sentinel spoke, a little strained, "This is two on two. Jazz!"

"Prowl!"

He felt Prowl launch over them both, kicking against Sentinel's helm as a lift off. There was a collision behind him, Optimus decided not to think about it until Sentinel was done with. Prowl's kick separated them again, but this time the Prime decided to dive into an aisle, giving himself momentary cover.

Optimus whirled around. Prowl had Jazz pinned down. Both visors were bright as they stared at him, their expressions hard to read. Thankfully, Jazz's EM field flared in panic as he stared at Optimus.

"I wasn't going to! I swear!" He begged, helm suddenly snapping upward to catch something moving behind Optimus.

He whirled around just in time to catch the Prime Baring down on him, sword drawn and posed to strike.

He moved to block with the pole of his axe, but the momentum carried over, forcing them both to fall over each other, falling into a ball on the floor. Sentinel landed on top of him, but with his

weapons propped at an awkward angle, locking their frames together as they attempted to pull back.

"Sentinel! Get off--"

Sentinel's optics were wild and wanting as he stared down at Optimus. He could barely see them through his mask, but their gaze almost stopped his struggling.

"Do you know what killing you will do Optimus? What it will do to me? You've already killed the Magnus. If I kill *his killer*, the council will elect me--" Sentinel's tone was filled with lust for the position-- for *revenge* -- "Sentinel Magnus. Cybertron's armies will be at my disposal. The Decepticons will be eradicated. And I'll be the one to do it-- *Me*. Not you. Not *Eltia's killer*. "

Telling him Elita wasn't dead wouldn't matter now. Nor would bringing up the fact that Cybertron didn't have much of an army left to begin with. Sentinel was mad-- *glitched*.

"You have no idea what I've done--" Sentinel shifted his weight, no longer trying to free their tangled limbs but instead attempting to bear his weight down on his opponent.

Optimus felt his windshield crack, and he winced. Sentinel couldn't crush him, but that didn't mean he wasn't above biting out his neck cables if his mentality was anything to go by. Optimus Spark surged in its casing. He was so close to the Matrix--

"You have no idea who I've ruined! Killed! Just for a chance at your Fragging neck!" he Re-opened his mask, spitting oral lubricant into Optimus face. "And after you it'll be Megatron. Then who? Your team I think. All of you are Traitors anyways. The yellow one, your medic, that stupid Ninja bot... Fragging... Prowl. Yeah maybe when he's gone, Jazz will finally--"

Sentinel stopped.

It wasn't just the yelling. No, his entire body tensed, every piston in his body ceased, and his optics widened. He froze, and for a brief moment Optimus could see confusion in the exposed mechs face.

And then, something wet his Optimus faceplates. It wasn't oral lubricant this time. No, it coated his optic in an odd blue film as it dropped off of the sides of Sentinel's helm.

As quickly as he had tensed, he went lax, falling down completely onto Optimus with a long exvent, as if all the air in his system was escaping him. His optics went dark.

Jazz stood above them both, servos up in surrender. His plating shook slightly, but still things weren't making sense.

Or they didn't, until Optimus shifted in an attempt to get back up, and he saw a slim dagger sticking out of the back of Sentinel's helm.

"Jazz!" Prowl sprang from somewhere Optimus couldn't see, and tackled the mech once again. This time only pulling him away from Optimus and holding him in his arms.

"It was an accident--" Jazz said softly, still staring at the dagger in the back of Sentinel's helm, "I didn't mean to. I'm a good Autobot..."

Optimus shifted himself out from under the mechs slowly greying frame. He wiped the drips of Energon from his face and stared down the two mechs in front of him.

Prowl's faceplates were creased into an angry frown, while Jazz continued to stare at his ex-commanding officer.

"Jazz," Optimus started, earning a snap up of a visor as the white mech looked at him like he was expecting a punishment of some sort.

He saw himself for a moment there, terrified and morally compromised. Jazz was scared, he'd just killed someone he had looked to for help and he didn't know what to do now.

It was Optimus and Ultra Magnus all over again.

"It's okay," Optimus said softly, "We're going to move forward and you're going to try to not think about it."

"I can't. You don't know-- I... I did everything I could. I tried so hard to be a good Autobot. I did everything he asked. I let him kill Cliffjumper. *Cliffjumper*. Bulkhead. Minimus. I let him do it. I let him take my valve, over and over and over," Jazz croaked.

He looked lost for a moment, as if trying to put something together without seeing the whole picture. His optics drifted down to the corpse on the floor, "If what I did was right, then I let mechs die for no reason. I trusted him for no reason. I don't think I could handle-- handle that. I trusted him. I thought, if I could just be a good Autobot--"

"He was my friend once," Optimus said, stepping towards the two of them, extending a servo, "Sentinel Prime was not a good mech. But you're not a bad mech for being manipulated."

You're a hypocrite his processor whispered at him, *you blame yourself just like he does.*

Then we can learn to forgive ourselves together, Optimus shot back, *I forgave Megatron and he's killed me three times. Forgiving myself for stumbling can't be much harder than that.*

Prowl took his servo first, using it as a balance to step over Sentinel's frame in the cramped hallways.

Jazz looked at him sceptically. There was some sort of thought process going through his helm, one Optimus couldn't quite make out. And then Prowl held out his servo, and Jazz seemed to take that as a more acceptable invitation. He still hesitated, inspecting them both as if they may turn on him at any moment.

But eventually he gave in. Perhaps he realized he didn't have any other choice at the moment. Or perhaps he really was going to stick to their side this time. Optimus didn't know, but he'd deal with it when the time came.

He stepped over Sentinel cautiously, as if Sentinel might spring up alive once more. But he didn't and soon they were moving back towards the next stairwell.

Now to just catch up with the others.

It didn't take long, not when the rest of them had Stopped only a few levels down. The three of them approached cautiously, not willing to startle anyone into action. Megatron faced away from them, crouched down in the main aisle. His mass effectively blocked it entirely, obstructing what they had circled around. Had they found something? Or worse?

"What's wrong," Optimus said, distinctly out of Megatron's reach, just in case he was still on edge. Though, Megatron EM field pulsed out a fan of relief followed by a new type of worry. He stood,

turning to the side to reveal what they were crowded around.

Ratchet was down on the floor, medical instruments pulled out and tossed along the floor as he used and discarded things. Bumblebee laid before him. Optics flickering as he tried weakly to swat at Ratchets arms. The yellow mech was saying something, but his vocalizer kept glitching out giving way to a mix of static and a high pitched tone.

Optimus burst forward, dropping down beside Ratchet, "He's coming online? They were bonded-- he shouldn't be--"

"A myth," Ratchet hissed at him, shooting him back and giving himself more elbow room, "Broken bonds don't kill mechs, not on their own. Death was common in war, they knock you off your feet long enough for an enemy to kill you but they won't do them on their own, especially when they're this new and under-developed."

Ratchets servos moved quickly, not addressing spark damage, but melted armor and components.

"Are you... Alright?" Megatron asked beside him, pulling his attention from Bumblebee and Ratchet working.

"Am I...?"

Megatron motioned to his faceplates, expressing the fact there was something on it. But when Optimus raised a servo to his faceplates and brought it down, all he found was half dried energon.

"It wasn't me--" Optimus started, "I knew him yes, we were close once but that was thousands of years ago. But I didn't kill him."

"I did," Jazz stated quietly, as if he didn't want everyone to hear him.

Bumblebee's vocalizer cracked again, snapping the group's attention back to his struggling.

"Enough! That doesn't matter. The spark damage won't kill him, but he's not in working order either and I need God damned quiet if I'm gonna get him workable," Ratchet snapped, not taking his optics off his patient as he spoke. His focus was locked on the frame below him, but that didn't mean he wasn't an active participant.

"I hate to be the bearer of bad news but Sentinel probably isn't the last mech looking for us," Prowl places a servo on Optimus' back. "Autobots are trained to not travel alone, and with Ultra Magnus down I have no Doubt sentinel ordered us a priority."

"You can't guarantee that," Cyclonus stood, looking towards the next stairwell.

"We can't ignore the possibility either," Jazz looked to Optimus, visor hiding any discernible emotion.

"We are almost there. Can we not put him back offline?" And then he added, as if scared what Optimus might think, "Temporarily, I mean."

"No--" Bumblebee croaked, optics staring more through the ceiling than at it, "I can walk-- I can walk--"

"No," Ratchet snapped in response, "You can't. And no, we can't just knock him offline. If something goes wrong, I want to see it instead of suddenly having a greying frame on our servos!"

"You said he wouldn't offline!" Optimus argued.

"Not from the Spark break, but from his half melted fuel pump he might!"

Cyclonus inched forward, servo outstretched and open, "I will carry him then. Stable him."

"No-- Blitzwing--" Bumblebee wretched, trying to pull away from all of them, optics slightly more focused, but moving wildly, looking desperately for something. Optimus suspected that something was more likely a someone.

Megatron moved, holding the small mech down, with a gentle force.

Ratchet worked quickly after that, and they fell into silence with only the occasional comment. They listened in a tense huddle, waiting for a barrage of footsteps to sound above them.

It was only clicks before they were moving again, a half coherent Bumblebee tucked against Cyclonus' chest. Every so often he would mumble, asking for Blitzwing as his field reached out, searching for something familiar.

Optimus swore then and there he'd never put himself or anyone else through that kind of pain.

They didn't make it far until they heard their next signs of other mechs.

Megatron stopped suddenly, making the entire group take pause and wait. When no one heard any sign of what had startled him, Optimus came forward, pushing past Ratchet to come up behind him.

And then he heard it.

The voices were faint, but when they stood still like this he could almost make out what was being said. But they were still too far away to make out anything useful.

"They're probably at the bottom of the stairwell, and the noise is just echoing upwards" Megatron offered, his tone hushed as he looked down at the next level.

"Then that's where we go," Optimus responded, following his gaze.

They continued their decent slowly, listening to what they could make out. They were only a couple of floors above the bottom of the stairwell when the words became coherent enough to listen. Optimus strained his audial as he pushed past Megatron, trying to make out what was going on.

"He is on our doorstep-!"

"And yet you're here, instead of out there. If you ask me that's quite telling."

He didn't recognize either of the voices but one of them logically had to be the senator. The other mech, Optimus could only suspect was Alpha Trion at best or another guard at worst.

They made it to the bottom of the stairs. The doorway was clear, and looking inside, something felt off. Unlike the floors and rooms before it, there was a locked door at the bottom of the stairs. There was an access pad to the left, no doubtedly linked to an identification number or pass code. Optimus turned to Prowl and Jazz.

"Nope," Prowl shrugged, "I definitely don't have clearance here. "

Jazz nodded in agreement, "Science sector yeah, but the restricted archives? That's a whole other level."

Megatron waded past them with a dismissive grunt. He raised his fusion Canon at the door and ushered the rest of them backwards. "Move back. And disable your audials."

Megatron engaged his Canon, knocking the entire door off its slider. It crumpled and flew into the room behind it with a deafening blast, crunching and crumpling before coming to rest just a few meters into the room before them.

Megatron strode in easily and Optimus jumped at the chance to follow, only to be met with three sets of optics around a short table. The room was already a mess, as if someone had been searching for something and had torn the room around to no avail. Data sticks were crushed in the floor, and hard records on magnetic disks had been thrown and cracked. The one mech, Optimus did recognize.

"Zeta Prime?"

Zeta had graduated the year before him, but that didn't explain why he was here now and with such a vicious scowl on his faceplates.

"It's *you*," The mech standing beside Zeta stepped forward, a servo shooting towards the blaster on his hip. But Megatron was faster and already had his fusion cannon raised towards the mech.

"Senator Nominus?" Prowl slinked forward, optics ablaze, "No, Nominus Prime."

Nominus straightened, Rolling his shoulders straight up and back. His optics lowered towards Prowl, as if assessing what threat he actually posed in this situation.

He was majorly blue, two toned with splashed of orange along his plating. It was an ungodly contrast, but made him an easy target in the Grey's of the room around him. He must have been the same size as Optimus, but double the weight, placing him closer to Sentinel's weight class.

An easy mark should this turn violent.

"Prime--" Megatron asked, looking Nominus up and down for a click before some realization seemed to click together in his processor.

"It seems you've caught on," Nominus spoke coolly, body language reserved.

Optimus didn't understand. Not completely. But he didn't need to. What he needed was the Matrix.

"Where is it?" he asked, stepping forward. "I am not negotiating."

"That makes two of us," Nominus ground out, optics darting to Alpha Trion.

The mech looked stunned, but Resolute as he turned to Optimus and Megatron.

There was a beat of silence, a still moment that built and built until it finally snapped.

Alpha Trion turned away, moving quickly for a mech of his age. Nominus followed, darting after him. Zeta turned towards them, drawing a blaster in one servo and an axe in the other.

Optimus thought fast, "Prowl! Jazz!"

The two moved forwards without hesitation, and immediately took to Zeta like Cyberhounds.

It gave Optimus the chance to move forward, motioning to the mechs behind him. "Ratchet, Cyclonus, watch the door! Megatron--"

The warlord was already at his side, moving faster with his longer legs. He smirked, EM field alight with the thrill of the fight. "I am with you Optimus."

They drew their weapons as they ran forward, optics locked onto the two figures before them. Megatron raised his Canon, but didn't shoot. The uneven movement meant he may hit Alpha Trion instead-- a risk neither of them could take without finding the Matrix first.

Alpha Trion turned at a knocked over shelf, making Nominus slow just enough for Optimus to aim and fire his grapples, attaching it to an awkwardly orange piece of plating.

Nominus fell backwards, snarling as he landed heavily on his back.

Megatron looked to Optimus, reaching for his sword, "Find Trion. I will deal with Nominus."

Optimus nodded, retracted his grapples and darted off around the corner.

Alpha Trion was there, a box in his servos. "Quickly! Take it before Nominus does!"

He didn't think he simply took the box and opened it.

And then his entire frame turned alight.

I HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU, OPTIMUS, MY CREATION.

Waiting for me? I have been on Cybertron before. I have been here, before.

YOU WERE NOT READY. NOT THEN, BUT YOU ARE NOW. NOT AUTOBOT. NOT DECEPTICON. BUT A CYBERTRONIAN. MY CREATION. ONE OF BOTH.

No. One of neither. I refuse to be either.

THE SAME CONCEPT. A CYBERTRONIAN NONETHELESS. TOUCHED BY THE END, NOW ACCEPTED BY YOUR BEGINNING.

The end? The beginning?

MY BROTHER, WHAT YOU CALL EARTH. AND I, WHICH YOU CALL CYBERTRON.

Primus.

YES.

You cursed me, put me in this situation.

I PREPARED YOU. GAVE YOU THE TOOLS YOU NEEDED TO UNITE US AGAIN.

No. You forced me. You made me do this. You gave me no choice. You took everything away from me. Everyone I cared about. You ripped me apart. Scarred me. Used me.

YOUR WORLD IS IN NEED OF YOU. A PRIME BORN OF ONE WORLD, PROTECTOR OF

MANY OTHERS. I HAVE PREPARED YOU FOR THIS.

No. You forced me to do this. But no more. I do this my way.

OH?

You're going to send me back. One more time. And I'm going to set this right.

OH? AND YOU THINK I AFFORDED NOMINUS PRIME THE SAME AFFORDANCE?

You didn't throw Nominus Prime into a time loop for over three hundred years.

HE HAS BEEN AWARE. HE HAS BEEN TOUCHED TOO.

He knows?

HE IS A PRIME.

What do you mean? Send me back. Give me a chance.

AN EVEN PLAYING FIELD. A PRIME FROM CYBERTRON AND A PRIME FROM THE STARS.

It is only fair.

NOT EVERYTHING IS FAIR.

No. It is not. Sometimes an ancient God tortures you for three hundred years and then asks you to overthrow an entire government because it wants you to.

I WANT MY CHILDREN TO COME HOME. NOMINUS DEVIATED FROM THAT PATH. WHAT YOU CALL A DECEPTICON, I CALL MY CHILD. THEY HAVE BEEN GONE TOO LONG.

You want me to bring the Decepticons back to Cybertron? Overthrow Nominus?

I WANT THIS WAR OVER. YOUR SCWABLING WEAKENS ME. AND THERE IS FORCES IN OUR FUTURE THAT REQUIRES OUR FULL STRENGTH. DO YOU ACCEPT?

Yes. But we will do this my way.

WE WILL SEE ABOUT THAT.

Megatron watched Optimus *Prime* rise. He looked worse for the wear of the ordeal despite looking... New.

In fact, he looked like a prime.

The Matrix sat in his chest as his chest plates had yet to close as he pulled himself upwards off the floor. He was taller, but only slightly. His plating had thickened, shedding the appearance of a rescue frame to one more reminiscent of a compact warframe. The trust in his legs and chest had thickened, giving him a lower center of gravity while keeping his waist cinched and tight for

compact movement in proportion to the rest of him. His scars stayed, if thinner now.

Below him, Nominus' own chest plates had splayed apart, revealing what he had feared most.

The other half of the Matrix.

Nominus Prime.

Two halves of the Matrix, broken apart when ripped from Nova's frame.

"I didn't rip Nova apart only to have my birthright taken from me!" Nominus screeched, throwing his weight just enough to leverage Megatron weight against him in the small room.

He rolled, darting towards Optimus just in time for Optimus to close his chest plates, the two of them crashing together in a large heap on the floor.

"That Is mine!" Nominus yelled, pulling them both up, and starting to claw at Optimus' chest plates. He brought up a dagger, pressing it to Optimus neck and whirling them around to face Megatron.

Optimus Prime mouthed at him. At first Megatron couldn't make out exactly what he was attempting to tell him, as if his processor knew what was happening and wanted to delay it.

From behind, blade still pressed against Optimus' neck, Nominus clawed at his chest plates, desperate to get at what now lay beneath. But Optimus was only half focused on what the deranged Prime was attempting to do. More so, he was focused on Megatron, optics wide as he tried to convey a message without Nominus finding out.

One more time , he mouthed at Megatron. Only adding another piece to the puzzle that was his plan. And then, he fought his servo free and brought it up to the scar laid right beside his Deception brand.and Megatron understood.

One more time.

The request hurt. He knew what it meant, there was no denying it. And he knew what it meant to Optimus, to have everyone back, to have another chance to set this all right. It meant the world to the mech, he needed this, desperately. And Megatron had no right to deny this to him. None at all. That didn't mean the request didn't wrap around his spark like a coil, pulling down and squeezing his spark in the process.

Megatron didn't want to kill Optimus.

He had just started to trust him, giving him a task to protect the mechs he so cared for. It was a major step, one that Megatron had hoped for since they'd arrived home.

And he knew -- he *knew* that it was going to come to an end. It had to. Optimus had lost so much, the Decepticon army had been destroyed, and the Autobots had lost most of their high command. This last war, this last ditch effort to make things right had *decimated* the Cybertronians as a whole.

This wasn't what anyone had wanted. This wasn't what he, *Megatron, the unmaker* , had wanted.

One more time.

But he didn't want to lose this either. He was going to kill Optimus Prime. He was going to do it, there was little other choice, but he didn't want to. He had to give this up. What he'd learned. How

he changed. The trust Optimus had put in him--

His dual swords felt like a dead weight on his hips.

He had to think this through. He was about to ruin Optimus more than he already had. But he was going to do it efficiently, as easy as it could be for both of them.

No new scars then, he'd go for one of the old wounds and open it again. That way, when it reset he wouldn't have to deal with a new scar and the panic that went along with it.

Resolute, Megatron drew a sword. Optimus looked relieved.

That felt wrong. This wasn't fair.

Nominus scoffed, while Zeta laughed wildly beside him, "Oh please, what do you plan to do? Skewer us both? Destroy the one thing that links us to our creator? You're willing to ruin to ruin the one thing That will let you set things *right*? "

Optimus laughed. It started out as a small chuckle before growing into something more sinister, building and building until it was almost uncontrollable.

Nominus stared at him with dawning horror. His face plates going from their passive confidence to something more akin to a realization that he was being eaten alive by scraplets. His optics went wide as he attempted to pull Optimus back and away from Megatron.

"Oh Nominus," Optimus said between gasps, "You have no idea what I'm willing to do."

Megatron rushed forward at the same time Zeta did. But the small mech was easily swept aside With one servo as Megatron tried to let his battle systems take hold. He didn't want to think about what he was doing, no matter the fact it had to be done.

He positioned his sword, bringing it up for one clean stab at both of their sparks. In one side out the other. It was supposed to be that forward.

Optimus' laughter had died, replaced by an instinctual fear. He looked at Megatron, wide opticed and almost shaking. He could see the recognition on the new Prime's face; almost feel it as his own.

And then, Nominus moved left.

It was a panicked motion to spare his spark, and Megatron followed his motion, or attempted to.

His sword dove into both of their chassis with an audible whine of metal on metal. When Megatron had realized what he had done he pulled the sword out just as quickly, staring at the mess he'd made.

The sword had gone through a few inches over from where he had intended, the angle being completely wrong for a clean hit to their sparks. Instead, his sword had gone through optimus' windshield, no doubt entering his spark chamber, but with the way his optics brightened, instead of dimming it was obvious he had missed his spark, if grazing it.

No no no no

Optimus fell, fans gasping in air desperately as he stared at the ceiling, silent.

Megatron scrambled away from him, servos up, unwilling to cause more damage than he already

had. Or perhaps he should stab him again, or-- or--

Nominus gasped, dragging his attention to the other Prime.

Nominus glared at him, optics significantly dimmer than Optimus' but likely only due to the energon loss. He'd been hit slightly lower than Optimus. By the looks of it, his sword had gone through some more important equipment, likely his fuel pump if the amount of fuel pouring from him was any indication.

Megatron let himself go numb, trying to figure out exactly what to do. Logically, he should raise his sword again--

There was a scream, one that drew Megatron's attention only long enough to see Zeta Rushing over, leaving the others.

And then, a soft touch to his pede.

Megatron looked down, emotions flooding back to him as he looked down at Optimus. He reached out and grabbed for Megatron, vocalizer cracking and fizzing.

"I'm sorry, I am so so sorry--" Megatron's own vocalizer snapped halfway through what he was trying to apologize for, and he fell to his knees, careful not to hurt the mech more.

Optimus clawed at him, pulling himself up onto Megatron's lap, vents still laboring heavily.

Why? Why are you coming to me, out of everyone--

" Please ," Optimus croaked out, his servos becoming frantic and desperate, *" Please don't leave me alone again- "*

Megatron didn't know if Optimus meant during his death, or during the next loop. But the desperate look on Optimus faceplates convinced him not to care. With his battle mask pulled back, and his optics still bright and scared, Megatron decided he didn't care. And he didn't care if he had to lie to make this easier.

"I won't, I'll stay," Megatron's vocalizer held a tone of static. It was a lie. How he wished it wasn't, but it was. And he was going to leave Optimus, in one way or another.

Optimus eventually found exactly where he wished to lay over the warlords knees, content to bleed out there, cradled in his arms. He choked, energon reaching his lips and sequentially Megatron's chassis. He seemed to think for a moment, deciding something before leaning his helm up.

" Megatron- "

"Save it," Megatron shushed, "You're dying. You don't need to do anything other than try and make this easier."

Optimus, his optics now glazing over and starting to lose their panicked glow, made a frustrated noise. He shifted, reaching into his subspace and grabbing for something.

"What are you doing? Stop that, you're hurting yourself,"

Optimus grabbed whatever it was, but lost his grip several times before finally producing Megatron's datapad with a disgruntled huff of his vents. He shook, but held the thing up, shoving it against Megatron's chest.

" Don't leave-- alone... don't leave me-- "

Megatron raised a shake servo and took it, turning it on. He looked it over. He had told Optimus it was for when he was alone again--

He felt silly reading it out now, especially with all the annotations.

He flipped to the first page.

"I was forged, poured and melded twelve hundreds stellar rotations after The crowning ceremony of Nova Prime, to the day. As part of a campaign against the energon shortage. I was paraded on my creation day, a line of new miner meant to work more efficiently, to drown out the doubts that the golden age has come to an end--"

Optimus had laid his helm down, but Megatron focused on the words, not allowing himself any reprieve, not a single click to think--

"I spent my first cycles paraded, excited for my new functioning and believing I was going to make a difference in the world--"

The lights had gone off in his optics. What he even still there, why hadn't--

Optimus Prime woke up.

Chapter End Notes

I'm working on the post mortem for this project. If people are interested in that, I welcome you to ask questions and I can post them in the post mortem with a bit of an explanation.

I'm already including some of the back storied for the side characters, mostly for my own reference, but some people have asked questions before about Minimus and the jetwins.

Either way, I hope you enjoy.

The epilogue will be posted soon I hope.

Prologue

Chapter Summary

Any so. We meet our cast of characters.

Help me understand the best is yet to come
Take me by the hand before I come undone
Because all this emptiness has left me numb
But it's darkest right before the sun

--the best is yet to come, Sheppard

Chapter Notes

Hey. I'm a sucker for happy endings.

Even if some of them are a little bitter sweet.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Nominus Prime snapped out of a daze, attention snapping down to his datapad. In front of him, Ultra Magnus went over something-- some law or regulation.

"Bring me any matrix compatible frame on Cybertron,"

Ultra Magnus stopped whatever he was going on about. He looked Nominus over with a curious optic. He reached for a datapad, turning it on and reading the contents. There was a moment of scrolling Nominus passed by clenching and unclenching his fist on the table.

"There are only four; Zeta, Sentinel, Rodimus and a new cadet named smokescreen--"

Nominus snapped, calm composure exploding violently. "I said Fragging bring them to me! That wasn't a question!"

Loop 54.

FIFTY... four. Big ol' five four. Loopdee doop fifty-four. Over three hundred years in total, though Optimus didn't care much for calculating the exact time, though he must be climbing to almost three hundred and fifty now.

Though that didn't really matter, not in any significant way at least. Three hundred years, Three hundred stellar cycles really only made up about a sixth of his life at this point, and cybertronians tended to live much longer than that. He was sure that he had read somewhere that Ultra Magnus was forged something like 14 million stellar cycles ago. In short, he had time.

Too much time.

But again such trivial things were not much of importance.

Optimus didn't scream or flail as he did usually did after dying at the hands of someone else. But that didn't mean his spark wasn't racing as he exited his stasis pod. It was odd, even as he reached down and touched the awkwardly fogged glass where Megatron's sword had pierced him. The glass there was thicker than the rest of it, making it obvious it didn't belong.

"Boss... Bossbot?" Bumblebees voice was small, with a tone that didn't match its usual concern for the organic destruction above them. It gave Optimus pause, his helm rising to meet the smaller mechs optics.

Bumblebee leaned on his stasis pod, vents heaving heavily as Ratchet approached him, servos reaching cautiously. Across from them, Prowl fell out of his stasis pod, falling onto the floor with a loud crash.

This hasn't happened before.

Something is wrong.

Or, something might be right.

"Optimus?" Ratchet asks, rubbing along Bumblebees back as he started to heave, retching as if he has something stuck in his intake.

"What happened?" Prowl groaned, rolling onto his back.

Optimus freezes, looking over the three of them. This isn't consistent with other loops, something has changed. Ratchet is supposed to complain about his joints, Prowl is supposed to stay silent and distant--

"Is this the Orion?" Bumblebee wipes his mouth with the back of his servo, optics meeting Optimus'. "Oh Frag. It is. Frag. We're back on earth. Holy frag, what even happened? Weren't we in Iacon?"

Then it hit him.

"You remember. You *remember*, " Optimus says, almost staggering back.

He's not alone. Somehow, someway, he's not alone anymore.

Ratchet looks up at him, optics wide in realization, "We invaded Cybertron. Frag, we worked with *Megatron* ."

Megatron.

Optimus stood up straight, he had to focus, if the three of them remembered then maybe if he was lucky, Megatron would too. He might have a chance against Nominus. It's possible, not definite, but possible.

Beside him, a familiar stumble reverberated through the floor of the ship. Bulkhead stumbled forward, field confused, "What are you talking about?"

"You don't remember big guy?" Bumblebee smiles, despite the way hes still leaned over, his vents heaving, "You know, Cybertron. Megs got involved?"

Bulkhead shakes his helm, “Are you all alright? Did the stasis pod malfunction?”

Or perhaps only some of them remember. Then who does and doesn't? Are there rules?

The Matrix in his chest doesn't seem very forthcoming. If Optimus had to honest, it felt smug more than anything. Is it because Bulkhead died in Vos? If so, does that mean everyone that was alive when he received the Matrix, remembered? There were too many variables to narrow a direct cause down--

“Optimus, you doing alright?” Ratchet’s voice pulled him from his spiral, “You’re colours are going pale.”

Optimus took a vent, looking to Ratchet and rolling his shoulders back, rising to his full height. Everything slightly smaller than before, which Optimus made note of, but chalked it up to being off put by the situation.

“I’m fine Ratchet, Just trying to process. We have that Techno-organic to deal with--”

“No, Bulkhead, Prowl and Bumblebee have a techno-organic slug to deal with, you and I are going to the medbay. You have a new scar that’s compromising the structural integrity of your spark chamber even more than before, not to mention your frame. you’ve got a primus given artifact that's given you a full reformat, sitting in the middle of your chest.”

Optimus deflated, “I suppose you could take a look after--”

Prowl came up beside him, placing a servo on Optimus’ shoulder. “We can handle one familiar foe ourselves. We’ll meet up with Sari and handle the key and everything. A look over can’t hurt you.”

Optimus looked around, concerned optics locked on him.

“You just died Bossbot,” Bumblebee added, optics conveying something closer to empathy than sympathy.

“Maybe a medical scan wouldn’t be a bad idea,” Optimus admitted. Given the choice between a team that didn’t know him and one that was overly concerned, the choice seemed easy.

Optimus Prime smiled, somehow, things felt like they were going to be okay.

Jazz jolted upright in berth.

A dream. Thank Primus it was all a dream.

Perhaps an exceedingly realistic, horribly terrifying and traumatizing dream, but it was just that; a dream. He could live with that, all he has to do is go back into recharge, shut his optics and forget about whatever had overtaken his processor while he was offline. At least he’s back in Metroplex, and he’s safe.

When he tries to shift down in the berth though, there was a weight that he didn’t notice at first slung across his pelvis.

In the dark of the hab suite, Jazz could barely make out its colour; blue.

Jazz’s processor stalled. He couldn’t-- He knew it was a dream but-- he doesn’t want to look-- He

had already escaped--

Jazz's tanks rolled, threatening to expel any unprocessed fuel still in his systems. Jazz couldn't fight it though, not for long. He threw the thin insulation sheet off his body and made for the washracks, purging his tanks into the drain.

He fell to his knees, venting heavy, and tanks still rolling.

It felt like he was seeing a ghost, come back from the all spark for crimes he committed in a dream.

He was sleeping with Sentinel. He was in berth with a mech he killed-- a mech who had forced him--

"You alright?" Sentinel's voice sent him back into another fit, this time his spark burning with the force of it. It took him a whole five clicks to settle enough to get out a response.

"I must have caught something. A virus. Probably from that off world mission," Jazz justified. There's no way he's admitting to Sentinel that a dream has him this wound up.

But with the way his frame is reacting, it doesn't feel like it was a dream. Didn't Optimus go through a time loop--

No. No way. It was a dream. I have to believe that.

"Frag," Sentinel grumbles, "The last thing I need is to catch something. Here. I'll walk you back to your place,"

"Yeah," Jazz agrees softly. Perhaps some space for the rest of the night cycle would do him some good.

When all is said and done, and the sun had set, and the rest of the team has gone to berth save for Optimus, Bumblebee snuck out of the base. Earth's roads are familiar, if a bit rough on his tires once again. It's a familiar grating, one he can't help but enjoying; like itching a spot he's been ignoring for months.

That is, until he found himself driving along the edge of Lake Erie.

Bumblebee knew why he was drawn here. It's familiar. And he can't help the way the familiar horizon tugs on his spark. He transformed, walking the rest of the way to the edge of the water. His spark swelled, and he sat with the water lapping up on his legs.

He doesn't know if this is the right way too check this, but he knows Blitzwing is out there. And soon, he'll be coming back to earth.

But Bumblebee has to know something first, there's no way he can wait a month to find out in person.

He sends the lonely familiarity across where the bond used to be in his spark.

It's silent. The water is cool on his plating. There's some bird squawking in the distance, alone, like Bumblebee. The wind blows through the small gaps in his armor, chilling his components. The base would have been so much warmer, but he needed to do this alone.

And alone he is.

Slowly, he brings his knees up to his chest, balling up and in on himself. He should have known. The bond was broken when Blitzwing took down Safeguard. He *died*. Bulkhead didn't remember so why would his bonded?

Tears pickled at the edges of his optics. He hadn't even had time to grieve the triple changer and now in a month he was going to have to deal with him walking around like nothing happened--

Something in his spark stuttered.

The feeling was weak, poking at the bond with a concern that Bumblebee distinctly recognized as not his own.

His optics shot up to the stars, trying to pick out where it was coming from.

The poking got a little bolder, now projecting a more lax confusion. But it was *him*. And they were still connected by some miracle.

Blitzwing.

Megatron's processor was foggy. His optics were foggy. His *frame* felt foggy.

So Megatron supposed he woke up in a fog. His sensor net was alight, throwing errors at him faster than he could read them. There was too much input and not enough all at once. His processor hurts as he tried to sort through it all. There's too much, and eventually he just sits back and let's his errors get sorted out enough so that his optics at least function.

Or maybe just the one of them.

When it online, the familiar sight is horrific. He's back, pulled apart and strewn around an organic lab-- part of him panics as he tries to focus, piecing himself together mentally.

His sensor net picks up on something else though. He reads an Autobot signal, it's too close to be a coincidence. He's trapped here with a deranged Autobot on an organic planet, chopped up into a million pieces.

"Autobot--? What have you done to me?"

When a pair of bright, spark blue optics lock with his own, he finally can see the mech well enough to see him amongst the other spare parts of the room.

His slightly larger than an average frame, bright blue and red. He's squatted down, servo outstretched and laid out on Megatron severed servo. Immediately as Megatron's words register though, the offending servo is pulled back, and the Autobot looks ashamed.

No. Something tells him, *not an Autobot at all*.

There's a gap in his memory though as his errors still sort themselves out.

The mech doesn't say anything. He stares at Megatron blankly for a click, before shaking his helm and standing. Though his frame is a mess, he can feel the autobots field, alight with a sense of loss.

He turns swiftly on his heel, making for the other side of the room towards a command console.

Megatron knows he should know who this is, but the fog isn't lifting fast enough.

He plugs something into the console, and Megatron realizes too late that he's downloading something onto Megatron's systems. But the panic is short lived, as Megatron realized it's literature.

"Well, next loop I'll bring you something to keep you entertained. Sari let's me download books--"

The mech turns to leave just as the fog clears.

"Optimus!"

Optimus Prime freezes. And slowly he turns around to face Megatron's helm. There's lubricant streaming down his faceplates, and his field is a mess.

"Megatron..."

It happened. All of those distant memories; invading cybertron, Metroplex, Optimus Prime asking him to kill him, all of that happened. And now they were back on earth.

If Megatron hadn't been there, he wouldn't have believed it. Nothing ever fit together this perfectly.

But Optimus was here, and he kept his promise. He came back. Even when it was likely Megatron would hate him again.

Nova Prime sat up in berth. His frame did not feel like his own. He found himself, looking out the window beside his shared berth. Slowly, he traced the light from the nearest star as it cascaded down onto Megazarak beside him.

The warframe looked peaceful like this.

Nova slid out of berth, exiting their shared quarters and immediately made for the command deck. His plating rattled, his circuits burned. He was back here, again.

Why? I got that damned message to Optimus. Why in Primus' name was he still caught in this loop?!

Nova punched in quadrant coordinates with a flurry that he hadn't felt in millenia; not since he had ended his own time loop. Why did he have to partake in some stupid new plan?!

There were footsteps behind him.

"Nova, *my spark*, " Megazarak staggered into the room, still tired and groggy, "It is the middle of the recharge cycle. Come back to berth."

"It's happening again,"

Megazarak went silent.

"I swear to frag Megazarak. I have done everything that mad God has asked of me, and still he tortures me. Even out here, in the middle of nowhere he finds a way to make me a fool--"

"Sh, Sh," Megazarak came up behind him, placing a servo on his back and rubbing soothingly, "How long?"

"Four hundred and sixty-four Stellar Cycles. Fifty four times. Not again. Never again. I tried his way, it's time to do it my way."

Megazarak paused again, this time only briefly. "You have a plan."

"Don't I always?" Nova smirked as earth appeared on their navigation chart. "Contact the phase sixers. We're taking the Matrix back and hurling it into the nearest star."

Chapter End Notes

I'm taking some time off from this series. Everything is in place now. Just fitting together is a little hard. I know people might have a lot of questions. But I refuse to give spoilers. But hey, ask anyways, I'm not above hints. And it may end up in the post mordem. Which may or may not be posted. Depends how it turns out.

Coming in the sequel!!

There's a lot of details weaved in here that will for sure make it into the next fic. Here's some highlights that hopefully don't give away too much plot--

Starscream deciding to rebuild Vos. Sorta.

Minimus and the Magnus hammer

Rodimus Prime.

Smokescreen.

The jetwins getting a new dad. Their last one kinda sucked.

Hey! The DJD come back. Don't know if that's a good thing.

Cyclonus' future almost comes true again. Ya know. The one where megs and OP frag but only tolerate each other. And Rodimus is barely holding the Autobot-Decepticon alliance together.

End Notes

Comments are always appreciated!

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!